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THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

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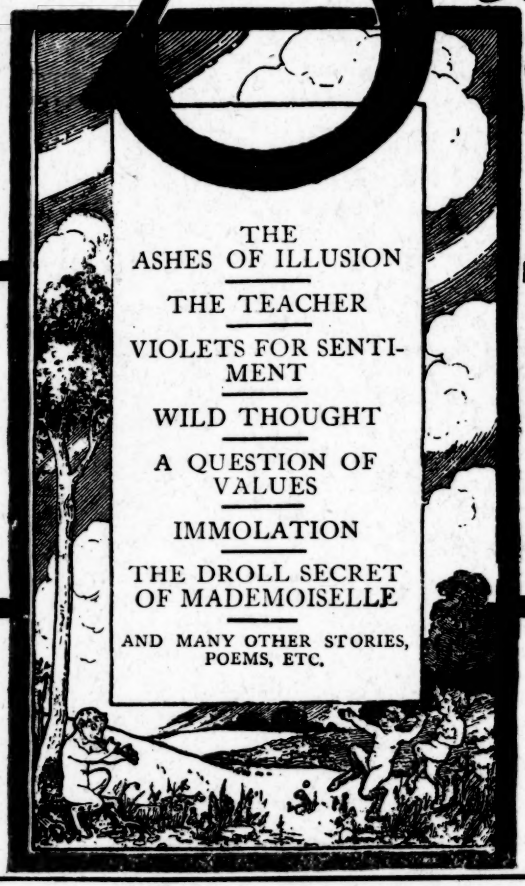

THE ASHES OF ILLUSION

THE TEACHER

VIOLETS FOR SENTIMENT

WILD THOUGHT

A QUESTION OF VALUES

IMMOLATION

THE DROLL SECRET OF MADEMOISELLE

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

SEPTEMBER, 1920

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A LETTER TO A SNOB

By H. DENNIS BRADLEY.

"Cupid in the Ascendant."

(The outstanding menace to the prosperity of the future is the power of the Snobureaucrat, that sinister product of war whose power and influence increase hourly, and at whose mercy lies the Trade of the Country. Ignorant, self-satisfied, saturated with class hatred, glorying in his contempt for the mere commercial, the Snobureaucrat, as his name implies, combines the harmless, if irritating, vices of the Snob, with the active power of evil of the Bureaucrat. My apologies are due to the ghost of Thackeray.)

SIR,—Fortune makes you a present of a comfortable salary and a position of power. The ineffable wisdom of our rulers has placed you as controller and legislator over me. This position our admirable rulers pronounce to be your due, without count of your dulness, your ignorance, your incapacity and folly. Dull as you may be, no one will accuse you of such monstrous idiocy as to suppose that you are indifferent to the good luck you possess, or have any inclination to part with it.

You toil not, neither do you spin, but, socially, you are "one of us," and, bred to regard trade as a necessary evil, you seek to diminish the evil as much as is within your power. And you are succeeding.

But the national mind is awakened to the subject of Snobureaucrats.

A Snobureaucratic caste is in process of formation, the "Vulgar Producer," the "Coarse Commercial," is alive to the danger. He does not view without alarm the prospect of your eldest son, Fitz Heehaw, succeeding as of right to a place in your bureau, or of your younger sons, the De Brays, assuming the power to control the commerce of the country.

To you the "Vulgar Producer," the "Coarse Commercial,"—who, by the way, furnishes that salary which at least you do not despise—says: "I can't help seeing, Snobureaucrat, that I am as good as you. I can spell even better, I can think quite as rightly, my foresight and business instincts are infinitely better than yours and of far greater value to the country. I decline any longer to wait in your outward rooms, to be repulsed from your doors, to be patronized, despised, cold shouldered and fleeced by a Non-Producer. Your social sycophants may do it, but you give them value and they consider themselves paid.

"I am sick of Snobureaucracy. I loathe your patronizing interference. I despise your ill-concealed contempt, and such words as Bureau, Department, Control, ought to be banished from honest vocabularies. A system that sends men of business genius to the second table I hold to be a Snobureaucratic one. A caste that sets up to rule Business and secretly sneers at 'Trade' I hold to be a Snobureaucratic caste.

"To laugh at such as you is not enough. You must be exterminated, for you have power, and therefore are you a danger to the national welfare."

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THE ASHES OF ILLUSION

By L. M. Hussey

CHAPTER I

THE size of the city oppressed young Frayne, and this was an experience contrary to his expectations. At home, when the madness of art first possessed him, he used to look forward to the life in New York with an ardour like a neophyte's in some grave moment of ceremonial conversion. He thought of it as a promised land, the goal of dreams, the city of ten thousand illusions.

In those days he perceived the city in vague, grandiose visions: multitudinous streets, crowded, noisy, enchanting. He saw himself there, not exactly as a conquering hero, but self-sufficient, courageous and assured.

His sense of strength had remained with him up to the moment of departure, and was enlarged by the very difficulties of his venture. He went from home with little money, with no one definite to approach at the conclusion of his journey, and in disobedience to his father's wishes. These circumstances seemed romantic; they gave him an adventurous thrill. To go empty-handed to the struggle appeared a worthy price for his future success.

But the reality he encountered cast a shadow over his visions. Those crowded streets of his imagination became the real one of bewildering strangeness, full of unknown faces, indifferent if not unfriendly. His lack of means, his wanting in plans and knowledge, lost the glamour of adventure; he saw them as grave liabilities.

Yet he was fortunate, for he found work immediately, and work that was to a certain extent in keeping with his ambitions. Moreover, he arranged to study. It was really a good piece of luck and he was astonished that his spirits did not respond gladly. Realizing almost at once the precariousness of his position, he could not fail to appreciate his good fortune. Nevertheless, the days of his dream beginning at last, he entered upon its enactment with a dull heart.

The day of his arrival he had done nothing toward the solution of his problem. He wandered through the

streets, trying desperately to feel exalted, but in reality abominably homesick. Every thought of home seemed a gracious one—even the thought of his father. Frayne had left almost hating him, full of the fresh memories of his scoffing, his harsh derision, and his final, entire refusal to help. Now, in the remoteness of a thousand separating miles, he thought of his father, not as justified, but as no more than deluded; in the end his father would believe.

There was comfort in this thought, for it revived the memory of his ambitions. The afternoon of his first day was well advanced now and, under the stimulus of his somewhat revived sense of strength, he began to think definitely of his immediate problems.

The first thing was a place to stay, a room in which to sleep.

He sought out the shabbier streets, watching the houses for "vacancy" cards in the windows. He passed the first of these he found, discovering himself too timid to make the necessary inquiries. Before the next one he paused irresolutely for several minutes. At last he went up the steps and pressed the bell.

A harsh-looking woman wearing an apron answered his ring. She had a soiled white cloth tied around her head and this made her blue eyes look sharper and colder. She spoke with a slight Irish accent, an inflection of voice that dropped a tone or two at the end of every sentence, giving her words a depressing, lifeless air.

She showed him a back room on the second floor, full of old furniture, the padded sort, covered with frayed red cloth. However, the room was of a good size, but when he asked the rental he was astonished and frightened.

"Haven't you anything cheaper?" he inquired.

The woman appeared to regard this as an offensive remark, telling him that one couldn't expect to get something for nothing in these days. However, she led him up to the third floor, where he was shown a very small room, overcrowded with the presence of a single bed, two chairs and a bureau. He agreed to rent this.

He was left in possession. Now he took account of his circumstances. He had a little less than a hundred dollars in his possession and he had saved this and the amount already expended for his trip with great self-denial. It was necessary to get some sort of work at once. He knew no one. He was depressed and afraid.

That evening he went out, but remained on the streets only a short time. He was glad to return to the haven of the little crowded room, which was now his sole home.

He lit the gas, sat down in one of the chairs, and gave himself up to reflection.

He thought about his own people, his home town. He wondered what his father was doing, where his acquaintances were at that moment. Fully sensible of the distance that separated him from them, he was, for a time, the victim of his already familiar fears.

But gradually his isolation, his friendlessness, his entire self-dependence, lost their austere and forbidding character and, little by little, his romantic sense returned.

Surely he would succeed! Even his father would be forced to the recognition of his success; some day his father would be ashamed.

His imagination expanded warmly, like a chilled flower that opens with the sunlight, and the future arose up in glamorous visions. He saw himself accepted, recognized, acclaimed.

He invented imaginary criticisms of his work. One critic said:

"Mr. Frayne might be called a real Greek—with reservations. Whilst he rivals Praxiteles in purity of line and fidelity to nature, he adds a beautiful modern touch, a hint of the complex modern soul, that is lacking from the pagan simplicity of the Greeks. He is without trickery. Of all modern sculptors, he is the most sincere."

By these agreeable exercises his forebodings were presently diminished. He

already had a practical plan for the next day. He determined to go, early in the morning, to the Art Students' League, and try to persuade them to give him instruction in return for any sort of work he might do there. He went to bed with an easier heart.

In the morning he kept his determination. But it was an effort to do so. The pleasant fancies of the night before, those pictures of the days to come, those thrilling words out of the mouths of imaginary critics, had gone with the daylight. Realities returned. But he forced himself to his purpose.

He looked rather forlorn as he set out for the League.

His face was not striking and, with its peculiar expression of drawn anxiety, he hardly suggested the sort of man whom the future would recognize and honour. His mail-order clothing fitted him badly; the coat collar stood out an inch or two from the neck. He wore a slight, immature moustache, and the wind agitated its frail hairs pathetically; it trembled on his sensitive lip like something foreign and afraid. His blue eyes were anxious.

At the League he hesitated, as he had done the day before outside the boarding house. Two girls passed him, went up the steps, looked back and giggled. He wondered if they were art students. Yes, they must be; he held them in awe.

At last he mounted the steps with the hesitating tread of one who delivers himself, at the appointed time, to the execution of a distressing and ineluctable fate.

Inside the big doors he saw a bare corridor leading back to a closed door and on the right an opened door that gave entrance to the office. He passed through this, removing his hat.

There was a girl behind the railing, who looked up as he came in. She raised her eyebrows in inquiry.

"I want to see somebody about studying here," he said in a low voice.

"What do you want to study?" she asked.

"Why, I want to learn to model," he replied.

"You haven't an appointment with any of the professors?"

Frayne shook his head.

The girl considered a moment.

"I guess you'd better go back to the modelling room and talk to Mr. Korbel," she decided, finally. "Just walk straight through the hall outside and through the door; you'll find it then."

His shyness increased, and it was a struggle to walk the length of the bare corridor, open the closed door, go down a short flight of steps, and turn, finally, into a large room white with clay and peopled with a hundred or more clay figures, amongst which moved three or four students—and Korbel.

Young Frayne recognized the master at once and approached him with a heart that seemed to beat incredibly fast.

He was a handsome man, a Czecho-Slovak, as Frayne learned afterward, and full of Slavic extremes. He could talk with a naïve fire in his brown eyes, impressing one with his passionate intensity, whereas, on the other hand, he frequently had moods of inaction and vague dreaming, inertias that appeared everlasting.

He looked at the boy with that quiet, somewhat searching courtesy of attitude that was characteristic of him. Then, hesitantly at first, but easier later on, encouraged by Korbel's sympathetic attention, young Frayne explained his desire.

"Have you ever studied before?"

He answered truthfully; he had not—but he told Korbel he had worked alone, at home, and mentioned his readings, and little by little impressed the master with his earnestness.

"It would be difficult for us to take you here," Korbel told him. "Just now, anyway. We give scholarships, that's true, but they're all held at present."

Frayne waited. A peculiar numbness came over his body, a species of despair mingled with fright. Why had he come here? His whole venture seemed insane now, the trip to New York, the foolish hopes, the sanguine dreams. He

had no money, no friends, no help. Without these he was sure to fail.

He was ashamed. Under his dumb exterior there was a frightful impulse to run, to escape, to flee from that hopeless place. He knew that the students were watching him, and he felt that they observed him with contemptuous eyes.

But Korbel was murmuring something.

"Wait a minute," he said.

Finally he revealed his splendid plan.

"We might try something," he said. "I could only offer it to you on condition that you were satisfactory; if not, then we'll have to give up the arrangement. I was wondering whether you couldn't learn something in my own studio. I could help you there. I usually have a man who keeps the place cleaned up for me, sees that the fire doesn't go out—you know, that's important in this weather, for if the wet clay freezes all my new work is lost—keeps the figures wrapped up in cloths, mixes my clay. Just now he has left me. I don't pay much for the job, but I could let you do some modelling there yourself, give you some instruction. That is, if I find everything satisfactory."

This proposal came to the boy's ears like an unexpected prize drawn from a lottery of despair.

His pale face flushed, his sensitive, finely-cut lips trembled, his blue eyes became moist.

"I hope you'll try me," he said.

"Well, I will then. Come to my studio this afternoon. I'll give you the address and then we can decide definitely. I'm sorry I can't do anything for you here."

He held out his hand and Frayne took it gratefully. Korbel walked away then, going over to one of the pupils, to whom he began to speak.

For an instant, before leaving the modelling room, the young man looked about him. Now, stirred and exultant, he sniffed the moist air of the place as if it were perfumed and delectable.

He saw the half-finished figures, set up on their armatures, upon which the students were working. A girl was modelling the figure of a nude, athletic man. Another girl worked upon a symbolic piece in which a man and a woman faced each other enigmatically. Against the wall were scores of old studies, most of them clay, now cracked and broken. Here and there, throughout the room, unfinished pieces stood swathed in damp cloths like ghostly bodies arisen in their humid cerements. It was all enchanting; it was a place of dreams.

The young man turned at last and walked out with the air of one who has met with a great happiness.

CHAPTER II

After the passing of certain depressed days, Frayne's fascination with his work measured up to his anticipations.

In the mornings he would enter the studio in a condition of mind like one who approaches a sacrament. The place had, indeed, a religious air for him. It was the reality of his ideals. It was his promise; it was his place to dream.

He always arrived before Korbel. The master came late, sometimes, on days when he had classes at League, not until long after noon.

Now that the winter was closing in and frost came every night, Frayne had to keep a fire lighted in the big stove; his first task in the morning was to shake this down and burn it up freshly.

The studio was located in a sort of court behind a Fifth Avenue fruit shop. One entered through an iron door; there was a flight of stairs directly ahead that led up to offices on the floors above. Beyond the stairs a narrow hall ended abruptly in a door. Passing through this door one encountered a wide corridor, piled up with boxes stored there by the fruit people, and further on another door gave out into a small, dirty courtyard.

There was a tree in this yard, very twisted and bad-looking—the young man wondered whether it would have leaves in the summertime—and against the tree, like a confederate in the desolation of the place, was an old stable,

forgotten by the city which had grown up around it, and so cut off from its designed use forever. Korbel's studio was on the upper floor of the stable.

It was an unpromising place to enter, but, once through the door of the stable, the artistic atmosphere began to assert itself. The lower floor was crowded with pieces of the master's forgotten work; the most striking was a more or less life-size plaster cast representing Adam and Eve, standing amicably together with their arms entwined.

When Frayne first saw these things a lump arose in his throat, but when he mounted the flight of clay-smeared stairs and entered the studio proper he was entranced.

The studio itself, found in that old stable, had the touch of another world. It was a genuine work-place, and therefore everything was whitened with the dust of sifting clay; but Korbel had interesting things there: finished and unfinished pieces of his better work, four or five straight-backed old Spanish chairs, very dirty, yet stately in their decay, a big, half-ruined Japanese idol standing hideously in one corner, and over the walls many photographs of sculpture. In entering this place the young man felt a great joy. In these moments he was accompanied by the full assurance of success.

He soon learned the rudimentary technique of his art. The crudity of the armatures offended him at first; he felt a sense of indignity to art that one should begin a beautiful thing by bending up old lead pipe and pounding nails through it into an old board. But once the wet clay was heaped up on this armature the fascination began.

The master was a curious man. Frayne found him remote and puzzling. Sometimes he talked marvellously of art; the boy began to know the men that counted—Borglum, Daniel Chester, Paul Manship, Jack Gregory.

Korbel would pass from discussions of contemporary work to generalizations, to ideals of art.

"Art is an enthusiasm only," he would say. "It doesn't mean anything; it has no purpose. Because it has no purpose and it is essentially meaningless, it should be all the more precious to you; it belongs so much more to yourself; it is the evocation of your own desire. Everyone must have an enthusiasm. The best enthusiasm is art."

But, astonishingly Korbel's own enthusiasm seemed to fail him at times. Often he was morose, silent; he would tear down a piece of work with an expression of contempt that gave his pupil a curious stirring of inward fear. These destructive moments affected him as if, in the simple knocking apart of a block of half-finished clay, there was expressed some fundamental and dire iconoclasm, a denial of the true gods. Often, after Korbel's attacks, he doubted himself.

Korbel helped him, showed him fundamentals, suggested certain simple things for him to model—but said little about his finished pieces. Frayne was anxious to receive a word of praise, even now, even so soon. As the weeks went by and the master was still noncommittal, these wanted praising words wove themselves into his imaginings. He created them, like the writings of the critics upon his work; he put sweet sentences into the master's mouth.

In the main he was happy. Of course, he suffered many discomforts, and sometimes—tired at the end of the day—he thought of the ease of his home, recalled his father, the little town, his acquaintances, several girls he had known. Frequently his work was hard. He was the janitor of the studio, and after this the pupil. Yet he still considered himself lucky. He winced inwardly when he thought of the utter friendlessness of his arrival.

"Very soon," he thought, "I'll make a cast of one of my pieces and send it West. That will open their eyes!"

Of course, he had not yet executed anything worthy of this purpose.

CHAPTER III

One morning, working alone in the studio, he heard someone ascending the stairs, and, turning, found a large, foreign-looking man in the room, a man whom he had never seen before. The man asked, in precisely enunciated English, for Mr. Korbel.

Frayne told him that Korbel had classes that morning and was not expected until late in the afternoon.

The stranger smiled graciously and walked further into the studio.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Mr. Korbel and I are very good friends. I've been absent from New York for several months—I hoped to find him here."

He then regarded the young man in a friendly fashion and finally held out his hand.

"You're Mr. Korbel's assistant?" he asked. "We must know each other. My name is Kheiralla; that's not easy to remember, is it? It's an Arabic name."

The two shook hands, and the Arab looked about him approvingly.

He was tall, thick and dark. In spite of his solid appearance he was light in his movements. His face was more or less round, the lips thick, the nose wide, the eyes small and black. His manner was polite, ingratiating.

Frayne was then copying a bust of the master's which represented an old man, with great moustaches, small, deep eyes, and an intellectual forehead.

The Arab smiled.

"I see you are copying the bust of my father," he remarked. "Mr. Korbel did that two years ago, and it's an admirable likeness. My father is still living; he stays alone here in New York and he's a very strange old gentleman. My name, Kheiralla, signifies 'Love of Allah,' and for fifteen years my father has been engaged upon a history of our ancestors. He claims descent from the family of the Prophet—it's a very interesting work."

Kheiralla then began to question the young man about himself and presently they were talking together freely. For the first time in his life Frayne was asked to state his purposes, his beliefs, his ideals, to one whom he felt could understand. His cheeks became warm, his heart felt large and expansive, and his enthusiasm shone in his face.

"I want to keep away from all the modern fads," he said. "And still I don't want to imitate the Greeks. If I can capture their loveliness of line and combine it with a certain modern thoughtfulness, I'll have something individual, a style of my own."

Kheiralla still smiled.

He nodded his head.

"Yes, you will," he said.

There was something faintly ironic in his vocal tone, and for an instant the boy was chilled. Glancing swiftly at his new friend he decided that the notion of irony was purely the result of his own sensitiveness. Kheiralla, it seemed, always smiled in that way; it was a part of his unfailing courtesy.

They continued to talk. The boy's emotions were a complex of pride, of satisfaction, of naïve pleasure. He felt the reality of his enchanted world; the world of art. At home everyone had ignored him; here, a stranger, an older man, a gentleman, a man of culture, an Oriental, a foreigner—all words of romantic modification in Frayne's eyes—talked to him as an equal, listened to his ideas, accepted him. He felt cosmopolitan, and infinitely exalted over the commonplaces of his former life.

Presently Kheiralla, on the point of taking his departure, offered a charming suggestion.

"Tell Mr. Korbel I've been here," he said. "Meanwhile, I want to see you again, very soon. I have a little apartment uptown where my friends drop in almost every evening. Now that I'm back in the city, we're just beginning our little meetings again. We have some interesting people there, some painters and writers and artists like yourself. Won't you come and see me?"

Frayne was delighted.

"I'll come any time," he said.

"Any time?" Kheiralla beamed. "Well, then, why should you delay? Why not this evening? I don't know who will be there, but we'll be able to talk anyway."

The invitation was accepted eagerly. Shaking hands with the young man, he left the studio.

When Korbel came in Frayne told him of the visitor. Korbel was in an atrabiliar mood. He only nodded, grunted unintelligibly and set to work on an elaborate medallion he was doing for the Czecho-Slovak Republic. It was a symbolic piece, and surrounding the figures in the centre was an elaborate decoration in the manner of old lace which, instead of being modelled, was scratched in the mould, producing a work in the end of greater finesse and definition.

Frayne regarded him coldly for a moment and with a touch of anger. He admired the master—but Korbel was a curious man, and in many ways too cold and unresponsive for a true artist. The young man felt that he himself had much more of the real artist spirit: the enthusiasm, the eagerness, the warm responsiveness. "What can one accomplish without feeling?" he thought.

Korbel, he held, was deficient in enthusiasm. This, no doubt, explained his silence as to Frayne's own work. He was loquacious enough in the matter of technicalities; he was willing to point out technical defects—but he never appeared to look for the soul in his pupil's efforts.

A sense of superiority came to the young man. No doubt he could never expect much from Korbel. He must find others, more responsive, more fluent of emotion, to understand him.

After his afternoon's work was over he hurried to his room in order to prepare for the appointment with his new friend. He had a bite to eat first, and then put on his curious mail-order clothes.

Nevertheless, he was an agreeable-looking young man that evening. His fair hair, long but not extravagant, was combed back into a pompadour; his enthusiastic eyes looked out with a naïveté of faith and expectation; his sensitive lips were smiling; his little blond moustache waved gently with every expired breath, lending an appealing, pathetic touch to his young face. He carried himself quite straight and erect.

It was early; he had more than an hour before he should really reach Kheiralla's apartment, and he decided to walk.

The evening was cold. A sleety rain had fallen in the morning and now the pavements and streets were frozen with a veneer of glittering ice.

Young Frayne walked up Broadway, moving cautiously along the difficult pavements in which the gaudy electric signs overhead were given a re-birth by the reflecting ice. The street was unusually brilliant. The crowds, emerging now for the pleasures of the evening, wrapped up in furs, in capes, in heavy overcoats, enlivened and stimulated him.

He no longer felt friendless in this city, and alone. He was at home in it, unappalled, sensible of its size, but thereby more expansive himself.

An idea came to him then for a great piece of sculpture. He determined that some time he would execute it. It would be a piece on a grand scale, a picture of this city, its complex immensity. Something exhibiting a crowd such as this, with some focal point of dramatic attention; the idea was vague now, but it thrilled him. All through his body the zest of life and achievement stirred and sang.

He turned down Eighty-eighth Street and reached Kheiralla's apartment. He inquired in the corridor and was directed to the first floor. He approached the door and knocked.

Kheiralla himself opened it. He was smiling as ever, very gracious. He helped young Frayne to remove his coat, took his hat, hung them both on a rack in the narrow hall.

The visitor followed his host through the hall toward a room at the end, from which a girl's laugh emerged shrilly.

There were nine or ten people in the room, and Frayne found himself uncomfortably shy. On a little davenport in the corner a dark fellow, with slightly slanting, oriental eyes, talked vehemently to a young girl, who interrupted him from second to second with her laughter; it was her voice that had come out into the hall.

Another couple, an older man, and a tall angular brunette, were bending over a piano whilst the man picked out a tune with one finger.

In the centre of the room a group of three girls and two men were sitting around a big disordered table, engrossed in what appeared to be some sort of a game.

Sitting alone, a little apart from the others, was a young, dark-haired girl who was turning over the pages of a book.

The Arab had preceded his guest; he turned now, smiling, and addressed everybody.

"This is Mr. Frayne, the sculptor," he said.

The two on the davenport did not look up; those at the table glanced at Frayne momentarily; the woman at the piano smiled at him faintly.

The girl reading the book met his eyes, nodded, and then resumed her turning of the pages. Frayne was pleased with his introduction, but he felt that these people were very offhand in receiving him.

Kheiralla was speaking to him.

"We have no formalities here," he said. "Would you like to meet a very sweet little girl? Let me introduce you to Miss Hollis."

He led Frayne across the room to the side of the girl with the book.

"Miss Hollis," he said, "Mr. Frayne has a true artist's eye! He told me at once that he wanted to talk to you. Mr. Frayne, Miss Hollis is also an artist, a great writer."

The girl closed her book; Kheiralla abandoned Frayne to her mercies; for a moment they looked at each other without speaking. At last the girl addressed him, smiling a little.

"I don't suppose you told him anything of the sort," she said.

Frayne rallied from his shyness.

"But I *would* like to talk to you," he said.

There was something appealingly sincere in his words.

The girl's rather aloof expression softened.

"Then do pull up a chair," she said.

CHAPTER IV

THEY were seated side by side.

"You've never been here before?" she asked.

"No, I only met Mr. Kheiralla to-day."

"How do you like him?"

The young man was enthusiastic.

"Oh, very much," he said.

His companion frowned a little and for several seconds she was silent. Frayne studied her face, for her eyes were lowered, making his scrutiny possible.

She was pretty. Her brown hair lay close about her small head in glossy undulations. Her dark eyes were well defined by the long lashes that now almost touched her cheeks. Her face was a little pale. Frayne thought he could see something pathetic in her lips; when she smiled it was with a peculiar touch of hesitancy. She appeared to be just a little uncertain of herself.

She raised her eyes, meeting his own.

"I don't share your feeling," she told him in a low voice. "I don't like to come here."

Frayne was surprised. His look made her explain.

"Maybe you'll ask me why I come then—well, a person can't be alone all the time. I get horribly lonesome. I hardly know anybody in New York. And I met Mr. Kheiralla just by chance and he invited me here; sometimes I can't stand being alone any more, and I simply have to come."

She paused an instant, leaned toward Frayne, and added, whispering:

"I don't trust him!"

The young man turned naïvely at

these words and looked in the direction of his host. Kheiralla had just come in from the hall, bearing a tray of cocktails. He was smiling. Observing Frayne, he beamed upon him and crossed directly to his chair.

"You shall be first," he said.

Frayne shook his head. He had never tasted a cocktail in his life, and now he was afraid. Observing his refusal, the elderly man at the piano laughed.

"Don't urge him!" he called to Kheiralla. "Those things are precious now. Leave that extra one for me! There's no use teaching bad morals to young men."

The words annoyed Frayne, but Kheiralla parried them with a paradox.

"Don't say bad morals," he asserted with a smile. "It is the Prohibition we now have that really increases immorality. I'm sure many homes will be broken up on account of it, now the working man can't get drunk any more at his customary bar-room."

The man at the piano smiled.

"Do you mean they'll get a worse jag somewhere else?"

"No, no, Professor. Unhappily, they won't be able to get drunk at all. Instead, they'll go home every evening and sit by the lamp and look at their wives for hours and hours perfectly sober. What a dreadful test! Do you believe the institution of marriage will survive it? Really, I think not! These are bad days for the future of the home."

They all laughed. Kheiralla passed on. The girl continued her confidences.

"I don't like the people that come here, either," she said. "Most of them pretend to be artists of one sort or another, but really it's all pretence; you'll soon find that to be true. They haven't the real artistic spirit!"

This was a familiar chord, and Frayne met her eyes eagerly.

"He said you were a writer. Do you really write?"

"Yes; that's why I came to New York. I felt that I couldn't do anything truly great at home; that I had to live, get the atmosphere of a great city. But it's hard when you have so little money. Of course, I could do cheap things and make a lot of money like the others do; I suppose I'm foolish for having ideals and making sacrifices, but—"

She broke off, looking about her with contempt. In that instant Frayne felt her profound attraction, the attraction of a real communion of interest, of purpose, of ideals. He began to tell her of himself and she countered with her own confidences. They were eager and glad, both delighted to find an understanding ear. Frayne told her that he was also poor, but she agreed that it was worth being poor, and taking the harder road, if thereby one gained a high purpose.

Nevertheless, she was a little sorry to hear of his poverty. She believed it would have been more romantic could she have met him, with his purposes and ideals unchanged, and found him with plenty of money at the same time. She sighed a little.

Frayne misinterpreted her melancholy.

"Don't lose heart," he said. "Recognition's sure to come!"

The angular brunette was playing a fox-trot and some of the others began to dance. Frayne and the girl pulled back their chairs close to the wall, but remained seated, talking. She promised to come to the studio some morning.

"Korbel's usually teaching then," he explained. "I'd like to show you my work when he's away. I admit he's had a great deal of experience and knows all the technicalities—but what's cold technique without soul? I almost find it impossible to talk about artistic things with him, would you believe it? He's so unresponsive!"

She nodded sympathetically.

The evening passed with surprising swiftness. At last the girl said she could stay no longer. He found that it was late and told her that he would leave at the same time.

At the door Kheiralla cordially shook hands with the young man and then turned to his companion.

"You've monopolized Miss Hollis dreadfully," he said, speaking to Frayne. "Don't you know she's my little sweetheart? You must be more discreet, Mr. Frayne!"

The girl was frowning; Frayne was uncomfortable.

A moment later they were in the hall. He took her hand.

"You'll really come and see some of my work?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, really. You're the first friend I've found. I don't want to lose you!"

He enjoyed the pressure of her hand within his own; it gave him a strange, agreeable feeling unlike any accustomed sensation. But finally she withdrew it and smiled at him.

"Good night, then," she said.

He left her, regretting the parting. He felt that she understood him. As he returned to his room he was scarcely conscious of the icy streets, the wind, the cold; he was thinking entirely of the girl and of his art, and in that moment the two intermingled intimately as if one were the complement of the other. His assurance was deep and strong. He felt the potentiality of high achievement beating in his pulses.

"Mr. Bertram Frayne, the astonishing young sculptor, is now exhibiting a figure that he calls 'The Modern Cytheria.' In this work Mr. Frayne combines symbolism with reality in a manner that makes for striking originality, if we may not say genius. It is the figure of a woman who stands . . ."

With these words of a future critic glamorously shaping themselves in his eager mind, he reached the boarding house and ascended to his room. It was very cold. He undressed quickly and went to bed. The happy dreams of sleep superimposed themselves upon those of his waking hours.

CHAPTER V

THE next morning he wrote a long letter to his father. This was the first communication he had had with his home, and he wrote it with a high spirit and some exaggeration; it was, too, a reproachful letter.

"You were very harsh with me, father," he said, "and unjust, and already it's beginning to be plain that you were very wrong. You told me I was crazy to think that I could be an artist, but even so soon as this people are beginning to recognize me. Last night I was introduced to a large party of artistic people, where I was received with respect. You may not respect me, but people that know something about art are better judges. Mr. Korbel, my master, gives me the finest kind of encouragement, but I don't suppose you're interested in having me repeat his praise. It's too bad that a boy's own father can't appreciate his work."

To write these sentences was to believe them. Now his faith in his destiny was profound, and, recognizing his own worth, he felt a peculiar resentment toward those who remained blindly indifferent.

Korbel had *not* praised him; Korbel seemed to want nothing more from him than a sort of exalted janitor service, and for this reason he was beginning to find himself thoroughly out of sympathy with the master.

Now that he knew more, had a keener eye, sharper artistic senses, was Korbel really a master?

He compared Korbel's work with that of other men. Had his teacher ever done anything as meritorious as Daniel French's "Angel of Death and the Sculptor," or the more recently completed "Memory," both in the Metropolitan Museum? French's work was defective, and perhaps influence had something to do with the Museum's acceptance of his pieces; the marble "Memory" had a bad neck and worse feet, but it was superior, he believed, to Korbel at his best.

Korbel's female figures were wooden compared with Paul Manship's rhythmic Egyptian motifs, however much chicanery might be connected with Manship and his collaborator, Lachaise.

Korbel had copied the Greeks in his

time; his memorial figure of the girl at the fountain was done on Greek lines. Yet Frayne felt the superiority of Jack Gregory; he had seen the group of the harper and the tiger in the Schwab gardens, and this was truly admirable.

As for Borglum—what of his master's work could compare with the Mares of Diomedes, at the Museum?

So he acquired a sense of contempt for Korbel's achievement, which was armour against his teacher's indifference. He had now begun his first ambitious piece, and when this had progressed sufficiently he was sure that even Korbel would notice.

His difficulty was in the matter of a model. Naturally he had no money to pay anyone for posing, and finally he adopted the plan of stealing certain poses from one of the master's models.

Korbel was working upon one of his innumerable pot-boiling dancing girls and at present there was a young woman who came to the studio three times a week to pose for the latest figure. She was not a professional model; Korbel had discovered her on the street somewhere and persuaded her that her figure should be immortalized in art; she came to the studio finally and, after several days of preliminary shyness and hesitation, she mounted the wooden dais and the master began to copy her in clay.

At these times Frayne, in a remote corner of the room, disregarding the master, worked feverishly to catch certain of her lines, to adapt her curves and postures to his own purpose. He was doing a poetic figure named "Temptation," which was to embody his ideals.

It represented a woman, standing among the gauzes of her fallen draperies, one arm extended upward, the head backward tilted, the eyes regarding an apple held in the hand of the upraised arm. He felt that this was at once symbolic and realistic.

Meanwhile, Miss Hollis had made her first visit to the studio.

She came one morning, as she had promised. He heard the step of someone on the stairs; it was a light, somewhat faltering tread.

He crossed the studio and then he saw her, half-way up, and afraid to come farther.

He smiled gladly and she returned his greeting.

"You're just like a hermit here!" she exclaimed. "There's no bell nor any formal way of telling you that I'm here; I was afraid you might not be alone."

They shook hands. She looked all around.

"How nice it is!" she exclaimed. "I shall make a story about you and this place with a ghostly sort of a plot. What are you doing?"

He led her across the room and they stood together whilst he showed her the sketches for "Temptation."

"The story of Eve, isn't it?" she asked. "And so that's the way sculptors work. What a lot of preparation! you do any number of heads and arms and hands and unmentionables until you get the lines that suit, isn't that the idea? It's like the plot outlines I make for my stories."

They began to talk about their art; Frayne felt his blood warm, as if from the congeniality of her presence there transpired a wine that passed his lips with the intake of his breath. They sat near each other on two of the carven, tall-backed Spanish chairs, speaking seriously, in low voices, in intimacy.

As she talked to him her lips lost their suggestion of pathos. The pallor of her cheeks was overspread with an enthusiastic flush. She was glad to find somebody responsive, someone to understand. She was glad to find any kind of a companion, for it was lonely in the strange city. And the circumstances of her visit excited her, for the coming here and the exchange of intimacies was an alluring unconventionality. This was the artistic life; this was the life of her expectations.

For a few minutes, when Frayne had exhibited the sketches for "Temptation," she had been disappointed, ex-

pecting a different sort of work. In these instants his efforts seemed a little crude to her.

But now her impression changed. It was plain that he was wonderfully sincere and devoted to his art with a fervour that had its passionate surge. Therefore she believed that she had underestimated him and failed to see his merits, knowing so little about sculpture. As she talked, her eyes wandered to the half-completed figure and its surrounding sketches. It became transfigured; she saw its possibilities.

They quickly abandoned the formality of "Mr. Frayne" and "Miss Hollis." He called her Helen and she called him Bertram.

They spoke of their first meeting again.

"I really detest Mr. Kheiralla," she said, "but I must be glad now that I went there, for otherwise I would never have met you."

"It was lucky," he said. "I needed someone like you."

"I think we needed each other."

"Yes, that was it. There are so many pretenders. It is difficult to find anybody with the true spirit."

The camaraderie of these moments led them both to a mood of exchanged intimacies. They spoke about their lives; they repeated some of those things confessed on the initial meeting: they were both poor, they were both making sacrifices. Again and again they told each other of the good fortune that had made them acquainted.

"It was the slightest chance by which you found me at Kheiralla's that evening. As I said before, I don't like that man."

"He annoys you?"

"Yes, he does annoy me! The old ogre! He tries to know young women; he believes he's fascinating. He wants to make a silly sort of love to me!"

Her words, imposing themselves discordantly upon the exulting harmonies of his mood, startled him. He was naïve enough to be surprised.

"He does? How ridiculous!"

"Yes; I wish I could avoid him in some way. I hate to absolutely tell him that he's disagreeable to me."

Urged by an impulse that he did not pause to fathom, Frayne addressed her with unusual earnestness.

"Oh, Helen!" he exclaimed. "Don't let anything interfere with your art!"

She seemed to be grateful for his words; she moved slightly in her chair as if to draw momentarily closer to him. She smiled, looking into his eyes. The exalted mood of both was restored, the knowledge of high purpose, the sense of high desire.

A ray of sunlight came in through the window, illuminating the face of the hideous Japanese idol in the corner; it gave the battered head a halo of gold. The girl turned as if startled; she saw that the morning was nearly gone and noon was at hand.

"It's late!" she exclaimed. "I must go."

She arose, and Frayne stood up, too, and they faced each other.

Neither spoke, for a curious silence possessed them both and it seemed the portent of a significant thing to follow. The girl looked expectant. The rose tint was in her cheeks again and the lips, as sensitive as Frayne's own, were parted a little; one could see an even line of shadowed nacre beneath. Frayne was uneasy.

He believed then that a conclusion was necessary, a parting more intimate than words, and the half-felt necessity of this oppressed him. He knew that his cheeks were growing red, for he was sensible of their heightened warmth. Yet he could not act.

She broke the spell, holding out her hand abruptly.

"Good-bye," she murmured.

He took her hand, then walked with her to the head of the stairs and watched her as she descended. She passed out and in the silence of that place he could hear the sharp little taps of her heels as she crossed the desolate court outside.

He turned slowly.

"I wonder did she expect me to kiss her?" he thought.

That would have been exquisite; the thought brought with it a warm thrill. Then he clinched his teeth together firmly, as one does in a moment of resolve, and shook his head.

"We must avoid that," he whispered. "I must keep away from everything that will distract me from my art."

The resolution seemed to embody a definite renunciation. A sense of exalted asceticism came to young Frayne, stirring him like a passion. He felt a very abandon of sacrifice, and the knowledge of it gave him the assurance of a chill, hard strength.

He crossed the room and looked fixedly at "Temptation."

Suddenly he remembered that Korbel would soon arrive; there was no clay ready.

He walked slowly to the big wooden box where the clay was mixed with water and kneaded. To-day it seemed a degrading task, but he began its performance through necessity. How stupid was Korbel! To keep him at this when he could feel the very pulse of inspiration beating in his veins!

CHAPTER VI

THAT afternoon, before the master's arrival, Kheiralla came in. He smiled graciously on catching sight of Frayne; the latter greeted him a little coldly.

Then Kheiralla examined his work and complimented him with warmth. These words of praise fell dulcetly on the boy's ear and led him to regard the visitor with more tolerance.

After all, Kheiralla had been decently friendly; in a measure he had played an inspiring rôle, for he was the first to treat Frayne seriously, call him a "sculptor," praise his work. Helen did not like the man, but a woman's prejudice should not condition his own viewpoint. The Arab had been good to him.

Presently Korbel came, but did not work; he left in Kheiralla's company, and again Frayne was alone in the studio.

Then he remembered that Korbel's model was expected that afternoon. The recollection came to him with the knowledge of a personal opportunity. For the first time he could make use of her himself, to pose for "Temptation."

At once he was impatient for her arrival; it seemed impossible to touch his piece again without the model. He paced the studio restlessly, went a score of times to the dust-covered window and looked down into the court, listened for her step at the head of the stairs, started expectantly when false sounds deceived him. He was as eager as a lover who waits for his sweetheart at the place of rendezvous.

Then, at last, looking out of the window again, he saw her approaching.

He assumed a serious air, and as she emerged from the well of the stairs he nodded gravely.

The girl looked about her, expecting to find the master. He was not there; she regarded Frayne inquiringly.

"Mr. Korbel has gone for the afternoon," he said. "You are to pose for me instead."

Her face expressed surprise and some hesitation. In her visits to the studio she had never done more than greet Frayne conventionally. For her he had been negligible. She scarcely knew what his position was there, but he was looking at her now with a certain air of authority and with an indubitable gravity. She decided to pose.

When she was ready she emerged from the little dressing-room, which was scarcely more than a booth partitioned off in a corner of the studio, and mounted the dais. Frayne approached to give her the pose.

She raised her arm as he told her; he said it was too stiff. He stepped up on the platform and adjusted her arm to the curves he desired. He drew back a pace and ran his eye up and down her figure.

"That will do," he said.

Their eyes met.

She was regarding him with curiosity, smiling a little. Her scrutiny startled him and deprived him of a measure of his aplomb. He dropped his eyes and almost stumbled from the dais.

A sudden nervousness gave him the feeling that he was trembling. She was not the sort of girl to attract him, for in his little town he had known only the simpler, more naïve types, and one of this sort, a precociously sophisticated one, a girl who posed in this way for sculptors, whom Korbel had met and persuaded to work there in only the most casual manner, gave young Frayne a complex emotion of fear, made him conscious of a certain ignorance, a certain disadvantage.

On his first meeting with her she had given him a peculiar moral shock, a sort of shrinking, that made him dislike her. Then he had noted her bobbed hair especially, and a faint scornful curl to her upper lip that was distasteful.

Now she was questioning him; her voice had a touch of nasal coarseness.

"Are you going to take Mr. Korbel's place?" she asked. "You're his assistant, aren't you?"

He did not look up at her.

"No," he said. "I don't work on Mr. Korbel's pieces. You're posing for something of my own."

He retired to the turn-table and took the clay in his hands. Drawing it out into long, finger-like strips, he fastened several of these to his figure and began to model.

His nervousness, his singular touch of fear, passed and was followed by a growing delight. He was no longer an apprentice; he was a sculptor, doing his own work, following the apocalyptical revelations of his own inspiration, and modelling from life!

The furtive stealing of poses and curves from another's model was passed: the model was his, posed for him. This thought of his former concealed efforts angered him. A deep consciousness of injustice stirred in his mind. Perhaps Korbel was not the blind one he had supposed; could Korbel be jealous?

That afternoon his enthusiasm appeared to be sufficient to carry him on endlessly at this work, without rest, without food. But presently he saw that the girl was tired; she rested; she posed again; at last he found that she was no longer able to maintain the pose. Without speaking he motioned her to step down from the dais.

She threw her silk peignoir, a present of Korbel's, over her shoulders and walked toward the dressing-room. Frayne watched her disappear. In a moment, by some unfathomed means, her impersonality vanished and he realized that she was a girl.

The flashing glimpses of her ankles moving beneath the silk robe, the revelation of her arms, one crossed over the other that her hands might draw the peignoir about her, were swiftly and instantly significant. His intrinsic hostility toward the girl was not lessened, yet her femininity aroused him and set throbbing his heart, like a new rhythm in its beating, a curious ache.

Standing before his work, it was no longer an absorbing sufficiency. He scarcely considered it, for a strange bewildering loneliness came to him, a complex desire.

The girl emerged from the dressing-room. She had run a rouge-stick over her upturned lips, her eyes were crudely pencilled, her bobbed hair shook back and forth beneath a cheap little turban. Frayne did not look at her.

She paused, looking at his work.

"What is it?" she asked. "Miss Eve?"

Frayne felt that her question was flippant.

"I call it 'Temptation,'" he answered gravely.

She laughed.

"So I've been Temptation, have I?"

He did not know how to answer, and so he was silent. She looked at the figure a moment longer.

"Well, it's not so bad . . ." she said.

There was a faint colour of contempt in her voice, and, although Frayne knew that her judgment was unworthy and negligible, he was nevertheless the victim of a depressing wave of discouragement. He did not answer.

The girl said good-bye and disappeared down the clay-whitened stairs.

Frayne stood motionless, staring at the floor. He thought, suddenly, of

Helen. He remembered their parting in the morning and the instant when, hesitant both, they stood looking at each other, waiting for something, expecting an obscure, significant event. He saw her very clearly, almost as if the morning's moment were being re-enacted. Then he knew that he wanted her to be there again, that she charmed him, that there was in her very presence a curious sweetness, an ineffable allure.

Why had he not kissed her then, at parting? The thought that he might have done so intoxicated him, and intensified his new loneliness. He forgot about his artistic resolves, the austere necessity for the ascetic life. An intolerable need came to him, never experienced before.

Pacing the studio restlessly from end to end, he thought of her, imagined the next meeting, found her held close in his arms, heard her words of murmured sweetness, bent his lips to touch her own.

CHAPTER VII

THE next day Frayne hurried to the studio earlier than usual, for he hoped that Helen might come and he was fearful that he might be too late. Korbel arrived unexpectedly about ten, and Frayne was forced to mix clay for more than an hour. Presently it was noon and she had not appeared.

For three days he hoped similarly and was disappointed, and then he began to fear that in some obscure way he might have offended her. He scarcely thought of his art. He did not touch "Temptation." The model came and posed for Korbel, but he made no attempt to further his own purposes by her presence. She smiled at him a little sarcastically, but he ignored her.

Again and again he called out from his memory the incidents of Helen's visit, rehearsing them mentally like players their parts. He saw her crossing the courtyard, heard her step on the stairs, saw her pale face, with dark, wide-open eyes, emerge above the floor, watched her gestures, witnessed her smiles again, heard her words and perceived the little changes made by the play of her thought upon her face. He could find no flaw in this; surely she had gone away with a friendly heart!

Meanwhile there was no word from home. His father had ignored his letter. This did not surprise him, but in the end it influenced him, and in a measure tempered the distraction of his new wantings. Once more he began to work upon his figure, for in his father's silence he experienced the old sting of unmerited contempt; he would show the folks at home!

After all, since they had never admitted his ability in the days when he could do no more than assert it, why should they find him worthier now? It would be by evidence alone that he could convince them. How amazed his father would be to unpack a large box presently, lift out the plaster copy of Temptation—and realize that his own son had done this work! How ashamed he would be! How quickly he would admit his error!

One evening, after an afternoon of hard work, he decided to call on Kheiralla. He felt that he could endure his loneliness no longer; that if Helen herself were not to be found there he would at least be soothed by the agreeable atmosphere, be among people who gave him a measure of recognition.

He arrived early at the apartment. Kheiralla opened the door, beamed upon him, told him of the extreme pleasure that his visit aroused. Frayne followed the Arab through the hall, and they entered the familiar room.

There were only three people there, and he saw with an ache of disappointment that she was not among them. He knew two of the visitors: they were the angular brunette and the elderly fellow who had tinkered with the piano on the first evening. The stranger was a man, a sleek, dark-haired chap whose clothes fitted with astonishing nicety. He was a Greek, and was introduced as Mr. Doptoglon. Kheiralla called him Basil. There was nothing said about his artistic status. But Frayne received the usual pleasant fanfare.

"The famous sculptor has dropped in again," Kheiralla announced.

The angular brunette gave him a gracious smile. She, the older man, and Doptoglon were seated at the table, and she beckoned Frayne to bring up a chair and join them.

"We're studying our vibrations," she said.

He inquired about the "vibrations," and was told that this was the system of Pythagoras, by which, in some occult, astounding way, one's name had a corresponding number for the praenomen, the patronymic, even nicknames. These numbers, in a mathematical process laid down by the vibrations, yielded, strangely enough, a further number. Then, being in possession of this key, you looked the ultimate number up in the book and it told you what you were and what you might do—a refined horoscope, in fact. They had the book there. In a moment the angular brunette was getting Frayne's vibrations.

The result was flattering, if obscure. He learned that he had an extreme potency, that his colour was green, which argued success, given certain conditions, that he had better avoid rash ventures, especially during the period of the Equinox, and that love would be his. In her vibrational office the brunette seemed to be thoroughly serious.

Afterwards they found Kheiralla's vibration and Doptoglon's. Then Kheiralla brought cocktails, the conversation became general and, when Frayne was ready to go, his spirits were better than they had been for days.

At the door Kheiralla pressed his hand warmly.

"I'm coming in very soon to see how your statue is progressing," he said.

Frayne smiled modestly and thanked him.

As he walked home he found some of the old assurance returned to his blood. His work was nearing its conclusion, and he felt sure that it would be all that he hoped. As for the girl—they had had no definite agreement together about the next meeting; she was sure to come again; he knew that she admired him.

The next morning, whilst he was working alone in the studio, he heard someone ascending the stairs; he turned—and saw her standing in the room.

The commingled emotions reflected in his face, the surprise, the pleasure, the touch of fear, and the obscure expression there of more passional feelings stayed the conventional greeting that was about to pass her lips.

Frayne did not move. The girl remained standing at the head of the stairs, one foot poised forward. The two looked at each other.

It was she who spoke.

"What is the matter?" she murmured.

Frayne lowered his eyes.

"I was so glad to see you," he whispered.

He began to walk toward her, and as he approached he could feel the strong beating of his heart. He drew toward her with fear, with the emotions one would have in nearing, under the urge of a blind necessity, a place of momentous encounter, a second of tremendous fate. He had no plan or purpose in his mind.

She spoke again.

"What is the matter?" she repeated.

He raised his face and their eyes met, and now they were very close. Her eyes seemed to enlarge, to dilate, to fill her face with a sudden, startled expectancy. In some way he drew her into his arms and found her unresistant there, for her head dropped back into the curve of his elbow, her hat fell disregarded to the floor, her upturned face invited his kisses. He pressed her lips to his own many times.

"Why are you doing this?" she was saying. "Do you mean this?"

He looked into her eyes with all the tenderness of his heart, with the assurance of his believing youth, with the faith of one to whom illusions are still real.

"Oh, yes, I do!" he exclaimed, and found that his voice broke huskily. "I've thought of you, every moment since you were last here, thought how wonderful you are, Helen! I need you. You've—you've given me something I

never had from anybody else. You care for me, don't you?"

She raised her hand and he felt the thrilling touch of her slim fingers as she drew them caressingly through his blond hair. Her eyes were very tender.

"Of course I care for you!" she murmured. "You were the first understanding person I found in all this city. I think we were *meant* to meet each other!"

He slipped his arm about her waist; they began to walk slowly across the studio. She looked quickly over her shoulder and laughed a little.

"Suppose someone had come up the stairs a moment ago!" she cried.

"And seen us? I wouldn't have cared. I'd have been proud!"

She rewarded him by the warm pressure of her hand.

"So would I, dear!"

"Korbel or anybody!" he asserted.

"Yes, I would have been proud, too. There is a certain person I would have enjoyed having discover us."

They had paused in front of his work; he looked down into her face questioningly.

"Who?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No, tell me."

"That Kheiralla, of course!"

He was surprised and he withdrew his arm, facing her with a startled air.

"What do you mean? Do you still see Kheiralla? Do you tolerate him?"

She shook her head scornfully.

"Tolerate him! I *hate* him! I wish I had never seen him. He annoys me terribly. He comes to my boarding-house, and if I send down word that I'm not at home he says he will wait until I come in. And then he sits in the parlour, and I get so nervous, knowing that he's there and wondering what everyone in the house will think of me that I simply have to go down. Then he smiles and smiles and tries to persuade me to go out with him, and it is dreadful to get rid of him. He called night before last and I told him I never wanted to see him there again. Maybe he'll let me alone now!"

The warmth of Frayne's emotions seemed chilled. His shoulders sloped down a little, he dropped his face, a little frown cut parallel lines between his eyes. He did not speak.

She regarded him a moment, and then, drawing close to him, put her arms up over his shoulders.

"Dear Bertram!" she cried. "Don't feel badly about that man. Surely you can't be jealous of him! Oh, do you really care for me enough to be jealous?"

It was not possible to resist the charmed seduction of her slender arms, the closeness of her appealing, upturned face. Abruptly he drew her into his arms and pressed her close to him.

"You're everything to me!" he whispered to her, and with these words he felt a sense of great and thrilling abandon.

CHAPTER VIII

Now they were seated near together, talking. As Frayne spoke to her, as he watched her lips moving in question and reply and heard the intimate sound of her voice, he experienced a feeling of gravity and age never known before.

His mind travelled back repeatedly to the days when he had lived at home in his little home town. These early recollections came up again and again to form the contrast with his present self, his present condition.

Although in actual time only a few months separated the present Bertram Frayne from the boy who had lived with his father, stifling his ambitions, subject to the degrading dictation of his father's will, the contrast of the two conditions, then and now, gave him the impression of age-long separation. He pitied the boy; the boy had known nothing.

How changed was his life! Near him sat a girl whom he loved, who returned his love; that fact alone made him old. A sense of deep responsibility settled upon his spirits. He wanted this girl, but, complicating his wantings, were his artistic ideals which her mere presence

revived like embers fanned to flame at the coming of the wind.

They were discussing their future together; what their relations would be.

"I know you will succeed," she said, "and I must not prevent you, I mustn't stand in your way, dear!"

"How could you stand in my way?" he asked.

"Oh, you know that I could, or you'll realize it when you think a little. We can't be any more to each other than lovers, just now, anyway."

Like him, she was thrilling with vague ideals of art, moved by the high phrases they coined for each other's delight. In urging him to live for his art a melancholy conviction of profound renunciation stirred her, gave her a feeling of proud nobility. Each of these two, indeed, struggled toward this deep renunciation.

"How unselfish you are!" he cried. "You think only of me! But I must think of you. Do you really believe that I would see you free, run the chance of losing you, if only *my* art was to be considered? There's *your* art, and I won't stand in the way of that, either. But please don't be impatient with me, Helen. Give me my chance. I'll show you that I can be successful! I'll soon be recognized. Then nothing can keep us apart!"

The moods of both settled into a mutual one of pleasing melancholy: they saw themselves as martyrs to high, sweet purposes; they would sacrifice some of the precious hours of their love to their exalted dreams.

They confessed their situations to each other. They told about their poverty; they saw all the world against them, they saw the jealousies of those who would resent their rise; they felt that they could conquer anything.

They spoke one to the other in grave, low voices, in the quiet studio, with no one near to watch or hear, unless it was the battered idol in the corner, grinning monstrously with its ironic, wooden mouth.

And then at last it was time for her to go.

At the stairs they embraced, and as she dropped her head upon his shoulder after his kiss he felt her body trembling a little, and, looking down, was amazed to find her sobbing.

"What's the matter, dear?" he cried.

Her sobs ceased and she spoke with her face downcast.

"Oh, I don't know!" she said. "Somehow I was suddenly afraid. I want you so much; I hate to leave you. Our future seems so uncertain. Oh, forgive me if I'm a little frightened!"

He comforted her; they parted at last with smiles. Yet she had aroused a doubt, and after she was gone he was depressed for a time and success seemed far away. Did she, after all, lack faith? He could not bear to believe that, and, in order to forget, he began to work again upon his figure.

It was nearing completion now, and, with the end in sight, he put more and more time upon it each day. Helen came to the studio nearly every evening and then they repeated the phrases of which they were never tired. When he was alone Frayne worked rapidly in order to complete "Temptation."

He did not confide his purpose to Helen, but he was vastly anxious to get a copy off to his father. At last the work was done; he experienced the thrill of relief that comes with the completed task. One evening he made a cast in plaster.

The following day he boxed it carefully and expressed it to his father.

In a few days some acknowledgment would be sure to come, and Frayne felt confident as to its nature. At last his father would be convinced; he would no longer cling to those ignorant theories that denied Bertram's talent; he would, in fact, be proud.

Moreover, there would be more than a mere justification in this business. Convicted of past prejudices, of injustice, his father would more than likely make amends, would doubtless be willing to help him until his own full success made help unnecessary. The boy began to think in terms of dollars; after all, a moderate monthly sum would

make him independent—and would give him Helen.

He pictured her in a modest little apartment with him, just a few necessary rooms for their first home. He saw her preparing his meals, watching his work, assuring him in moments of depression, ministering to his little wants. He glowed with the thought of their hours of love.

Strangely enough, he scarcely considered her art. No doubt she had some talent, but it would surely never be a barrier between them, taking her mind from his own concerns. Probably, once they were together, she would forget everything but her love. That was the usual course of women in the romantic books he had read.

CHAPTER IX

A DAY or two later young Frayne had a disagreement with Korbel, which ended unfortunately.

Korbel had been out of town for a few days, but had left behind him several unfinished figures, wrapped up in the usual damp swathings which it was Frayne's duty to keep moist. Unhappily, in his absorption with his own work, he had forgotten the master's.

He came into the studio one morning and found Korbel there, and when he entered the master glared at him ferociously.

"Look what you've done!" he cried.

Frayne's eyes followed his pointing finger; one of the figures was disengaged from its swathings, and down the front extended a long disfiguring crack. He had forgotten to wet the cloths!

"Look at that!" Korbel exclaimed. "Probably ruined! Hours of work to restore it, at any rate. What have you been doing, taking a holiday? Enjoying a little rest?"

Frayne blushed.

"I'm sorry . . ." he murmured

"Sorry! Does that help me? Is that any explanation of your abominable carelessness? What do you think you're here for?"

Frayne's face crimsoned and he began to explain, haltingly.

"I'm terribly sorry," he said. "I know I should have been . . . been more careful. I was so busy—I was working so hard I forgot. . . ."

"Working hard? What do you mean?"

"I was finishing my own figure . . ."

Korbel glared, his black eyebrows drawn down until they seemed to obscure the dark eyes, the contracted pupils.

"A figure of your own!"

He swung his body around and pointed at the clay original of "Temptation."

"Do you mean that thing? So that was more important than my work, was it?"

Frayne was silent.

"Can't you answer me, young fellow?"

A sudden bitter anger welled up in the boy's heart, a sense of great injustice burned there like a fresh flame.

"To me it was," he answered in a low voice.

Korbel's eyebrows lifted, his eyes widened, as if in the low-spoken words he had heard an utterance too incredible for belief.

"Confound you!" he exclaimed. "Don't you know that you're a young ass? You're like a lot more of these so-called art students; you're a master over-night. Study? No, you don't need to study; you're bursting with genius, with great talents!"

He turned again and stared at "Temptation." Slowly he began to laugh, without mirth, devastatingly.

"How absurd!" he cried.

He looked at young Frayne, who stood before him in the impotence of mute anger and chagrin.

"When you came here," he said, "I told you I'd take you and keep you as long as you were satisfactory. Well, you're no longer satisfactory. The month ends next week; you've got that much time to find another working place and—another teacher!"

Frayne raised his indignant face and met the master's eyes.

"I'll be very glad to get out of here," he said.

Korbel shrugged his shoulders, stared about him at the four corners of the studio and then, taking up his hat and coat, walked to the stairs and disappeared.

That evening Frayne told the story to Helen. They discussed it gravely and at first she was frightened, but he seemed so assured, so confident, that her fears gradually lessened.

"Don't worry," he told her. "I'll have some good news for you in a day or two—a little surprise. I don't think I'll have to spend my good time mixing clay and wetting rags and keeping fires for anyone!"

He was thinking of his father. She questioned him, but he only smiled and told her to wait.

Later in the evening, at parting, she put her hands up, grasping the edges of his coat lapel, and looked rather shyly into his face.

"I wrote you a letter this afternoon," she said.

"A letter to me? Why?"

"It was—well, something I hated to talk about. Or rather, I asked you to do something for me that somehow I couldn't bring myself to ask to your face."

He became concerned; he felt a touch of fear.

"Tell me what it is," he inquired.

"No, you must read the letter. Don't worry!"

He returned to his boarding-house in a depressed mood.

The next morning he hurried to the studio, and in the outer hall of the building, in a box provided for that purpose, found the letter addressed to him.

He opened it on his way through the corridor and, standing out in the littered courtyard, read her words.

It was an accusation against Kheiralla.

"You were so angry," she said, "when I first told you about him that I was afraid to tell you this when we were together for fear, with me there, you would rush away and get yourself into some dreadful trouble. Also, I was ashamed, dear. Can you understand that? I was ashamed because I hadn't been able to get rid of that man, ashamed that I had ever let myself know him.

"He came to the house the other night and I went down to tell him that this was the last time he could ever speak to me; I wanted to tell him about you. I did, and he laughed!

"It made me terribly angry. I stood up and said good-bye and turned to go out of the room, and then he sprang up from his chair and caught me about the shoulders and turned me around and tried to kiss me. I had a dreadful time to get away from him without making a noise and attracting the attention of everybody in the house, which would have killed me with shame. He tore my dress holding on to me. I told him he was despicable and a brute and he only laughed at me.

"As I left the room he said he was coming again and that I'd better forget all about that 'young ass'—that's the way he referred to you. And you thought he was friendly. Oh, I wish you would write him a letter and just tell him what you think. I don't know what to do. He frightens me. He's so horribly persistent and at the same time I can't afford to make a scene here in this house."

Reading this, Frayne's rage was boundless. He crumpled the letter in his hand, thrust it into his pocket and hurried out of the studio.

On Fifth Avenue he took an uptown bus.

Reaching Kheiralla's apartment house, he hurried through the corridor and knocked violently at Kheiralla's door.

A moment later he heard a step inside, the door was opened, and Kheiralla stood there smiling at him.

"A delightful surprise!" he cried. "Come in!"

Frayne followed him into the hall and then stopped.

"I want to talk to you!" he exclaimed.

The Arab turned sharply and looked at him with an expression of polite, somewhat surprised interest.

"Won't you come in and sit down?" he asked.

"No. I can say what I have to say right here. And that is that you've got to let Miss Hollis alone, Mr. Kheiralla! I know all about your persecution of her. Well, you'd better stop it!"

Kheiralla's suavity was scarcely modified, unless it was by a slight lifting of his eyebrows.

"My dear friend!" he exclaimed softly, "I believe I knew the young lady before you. Don't you think you're intruding a little in something that's not quite your affair?"

Frayne glared at the man in front of him.

"I don't care how long you've known her!" he cried. "You're not going to know her any longer, and I say so. You'd better look out, that's all I have to tell you!"

Kheiralla laughed, baring two rows of regular, slightly discoloured teeth. There was something irrationally disconcerting in his laugh, something that deprived the boy of a measure of his assurance, that made him obscurely conscious of his youth, something sardonic, like a veiled criticism that put him at a disadvantage.

Kheiralla made a little deprecating gesture with his plump hands.

"How foolish you young men are!" he said. "I thought well of you, Mr. Frayne. I like young people, young art students. I was hopeful for you . . ."

"What do you mean?" Frayne demanded.

"I've been disappointed," he went on. "I saw Mr. Korbel yesterday and he told me that there was no hope for you; unhappily, you have no talent. Let me give you the advice of an older man, almost a father. Go back to your own people, Mr. Frayne, and don't waste any more of your time. Some time or other we all make mistakes and must recognize them. You must not try to be a sculptor any longer. As for Miss Hollis, she's a very pleasant young lady, but—try to forget her."

He was smiling again. Frayne felt a feral impulse to leap upon him, batter his face, beat the smile from those thick lips with his clenched fists. Yet, in spite of his immense anger, the smile disarmed him. It was vague, it was sardonic, it implied a secret, devastating truth. Muttering phrases of incoherent threats, the boy turned to the door and strode out of the odious apartment.

He did not return to the studio that day. All the afternoon he wandered through the streets, and in the evening he returned to his room sick and faint with a throbbing headache. He lay down on his bed and fell asleep almost immediately.

CHAPTER X

FRAYNE awoke in the morning without a headache, but his spirits were very low. Kheiralla's words, the words that denied the fulfilment of all his dreams of art, repeated themselves in his memory like an accusation that no reasoning will disallow. Again and again he tried to defend himself with an armour of scorn that was ineffectual, since it depended upon his weakened assurance. Everyone was against him.

"I'll show them all!" he muttered to himself.

But might he not be wrong?

After dressing, he went out for breakfast and then, without plans, began to walk down Fifth Avenue. Work was impossible, and he decided not to go to the studio. Let Korbel rage! He cared nothing for Korbel or any of them!

But, tired of his aimlessness, he changed his decision and turned in at last at the familiar iron door. In the letter-box he looked idly for mail. He was surprised to find a letter for himself.

In a moment he recognized the envelope. It was one of his father's, badly printed; the name was in the corner: "J. R. Frayne, General Merchandise."

Eagerly he tore open the flap, withdrew the letter, read the message.

Then, with a gesture of rage, he ripped the sheet into many pieces, dropping them upon the floor.

"Dear Bertram," his father began. "I am astonished and pained. A box came here and it had a plaster statue you made that shows just how far you've gone on the wrong road. Is that what you went to New York for—to make immoral statues of women without any clothes on? Is that the thing you wanted to do, talked about, disobeyed me to practice? I am shocked, deeply. I never thought a son of mine, a member of a family that has had a name for honest, upright living for three generations in this town, could fall so low as to spend his days in such immoralities.

"My boy, I feel that you must obey me now or I must for ever forget that such a son of mine is bringing shame to an honourable name. Destroy every immoral statue your deluded hands have made in the sin of your disobedience. Come home to me at once and work here like an honest man in the store. Find some nice girl and settle down and earn an honourable living for yourself and your family. I will expect you within one week, and if you do not come by that time, never write to me or expect to hear from me again."

The torn pieces of the letter fluttered along the floor and Frayne, walking slowly ahead, abandoned them. His flaring anger subsided, like a spent flame. At his temples a confused throbbing beat monotonously; he stumbled on, mechanically, without seeing.

He crossed the court; he mounted the studio steps.

Within the studio he saw a figure huddled in one of the high-backed carven chairs. It was a girl; her face was buried in her hands, she was sobbing. Staring an instant, he recognized her: it was Helen.

She heard his step and raised her face. Her cheeks were wet with tears.

"Oh, why have you been so long," she cried. "I thought you were never coming!"

He looked at her without smiling; the confusion of his emotions, mixed with his surprise at her state, made all his body numb.

"Why are you crying?" he asked.

She was drying her cheeks with a small, compressed handkerchief.

"I didn't intend that you'd find me crying," she said. "It came on me so suddenly, sitting here, waiting. I was thinking. Everything is so hard. Oh, I can't help it, Bertram. I'm miserable to-day, no courage, nothing. I feel I'm a frightful failure. This morning my very last story was returned to me, without a word, just a printed slip. I worked on it so long, so hard. I know I can't write! . . ."

She dropped her eyes and stared down at the whitened floor. Frayne approached her slowly, looking down at her. Out of the confusion of his emotions a determination shaped itself. His cheeks flushed slowly and, as if in a miracle, the burden of his black oppression began to lift itself, like a palpable weight withdrawn from his tortured spirits.

At last he had reached a true renunciation.

He dropped down at her side, took her hands in his own, pressed her slim fingers against his palms.

"Dear sweetheart," he murmured, "we must get married."

For a moment she still stared at the floor, then, raising her face, she met his eyes with a startled widening of her own.

"What do you mean? How can we? Your art, your—"

"My art!"

The exclamation passed his lips, followed by a bitter laugh.

"I'm never going to model anything again," he said. "I'm a failure, too. I have no talent. . . ."

A shocked expression superseded that of her surprise, but before her words could deny his blasphemy he spoke again.

He told her of his father's letter, of his black doubts, of his final

conviction that had come just in that moment.

"I'm going back," he said. "Back home, dearest; you must come with me! Father wants me to find a nice girl—he hasn't any idea how sweet and dear you are! There's plenty of work for me there; we'll have our home, our love. . . ."

In a moment they were in each other's arms. She kissed him tenderly, she ran her caressing fingers through his hair—and she gave her assent.

Looking into her joyful face he felt his last great pang and hurt. How easily she accepted his abandonment of his dreams! Then, like the others, she had not believed either!

But in a moment his depression was vanished and he was happy again. An old familiar exaltation stirred him. The habit of believing himself an artist could not pass in such an abrupt denial. After all, was not love an art? How wonderfully he and Helen would love each other!

Out of the ashes of the dead illusion arose, like the fabled bird, a new. He was young; he was believing. Illusions were his necessity, the companions of his hours. Love, too, was an art; the art of arts!

In low-spoken words he began to explain his thought to the girl, and she gladly agreed with him. Sweet, glamorous days lay endlessly before them.

Youth was endless.

They decided to leave for his home next day, for now there was nothing to keep either of them in this city of New York.

MIRAGE

By George O'Neil

HERE in this land of windless distance
Where, fold on fold, horizons die,
Unshadowed through the day's existence
But for an arrow bird blown high,—
Through all this lividness and space,
Starkness of sand in cruel drouth,
There is the kindness of your face,
The cool clear flower of your mouth.

TO some people Washington Square is the centre of all originality in Art, Literature, and Philosophy in the United States. To others it is the place where the buses turn around and start back.

WHEN a woman is beautiful no one inquires whether she knows how to spell.

NEVER ARGUE WITH A WOMAN

By T. F. Mitchell

NEVER argue with a woman on any subject whatever. Take my case as a warning. I started arguing with Clarissa as to how much Baudelaire was indebted to Poe for his decadence, and she ended by convincing me that I ought to marry her.

THE WHITE LASS LINNETH

By A. Newberry Choyce

SHE is gone by, the white lass Linneth,
With her folk all in black but she all white;
I heard one cry a little and call it death
And I laughed at the bearers, she would weigh so light.

Dying is sad, I did not think she'd die.
And Death lives in the dark, I did not think she'd go.
The blackthorn bushes as she went by
Were all full-bosomed with their scented snow.

And the dusty brown sparrows out in the road
Chirped at their love lessons aflutter and athrill
When the four men passed with their little light load. . . .
And a strange bell sang till the noon went still.

She is gone by, the white lass Linneth,
And down a quiet lane and far away from me;
A little heap of white which folk call death
Like cold blossom drifted from a blackthorn tree.

ALTHOUGH light travels one hundred and eighty thousand miles a second, it never reaches some people.

A QUESTION OF VALUES

By Edith Chapman

I

MRS. BEVERLY stood by the telephone, a little stunned by the telegraph message that had just been delivered her:

"Am playing in Chicago. Will arrive to-morrow morning for flying visit. —Karen."

It was a good many years since she had seen her sister-in-law; they had, in fact, met scarcely at all since the time when that same sister-in-law had been her most intimate friend, and she herself hadn't been married.

She still had a photograph of the girl as she had looked then. Tall, very dark, very slight, with a little tender face set upon a long throat at a drooping angle; a surprisingly white complexion for one so dark; small features that held their own, however, even under the cloud of her black curly hair.

Karen's face had always reminded her in those days of the famous Lorna Doone picture. It had the same extravagant, romantic quality, the same innocence, the same almost incredible loveliness. A very different Karen from the one she had been following of late in the theatrical magazines. It wasn't that she had changed much in any outward particular. She appeared to have kept her slenderness, to have attenuated herself, if anything; she was no less beautiful. But the intrinsic values of the face had changed. That former haze of tenderness, almost helplessness, was missing —the romantic quality. The features stood out sharp and positive; the curved mouth was more firmly outlined; its smile now never shifted; the eyes had lost their clairvoyance. Was it simply that the child in her had died? If so, how had it died? She knew so little of Karen, after all! . . .

The minutes passed, and still Mrs. Beverly continued to stand where she had received the message. She couldn't seem to assimilate it. Her body was tense, her hands were worrying the edge of the table; her forehead was wrinkled; it annoyed her to feel herself trembling.

She couldn't understand her reaction. She ought to have been thrilled with anticipation, self-forgetful, carried away. Instead, here she was shrinking into herself, with a painful, acknowledged dread. She dreaded meeting this friend whom she had loved and did love better than any other, better almost than her own people. Indeed, her love for the girl had been the beginning of her love for Karen's brother. She had loved John in desperation almost, clung to him, just at the first, as the only tangible link with his sister that remained. And yet he was totally different. One could scarcely believe in the authenticity of any blood tie between the two. John, quiet, meticulous, academic. Karen, an exotic meteor that had finally been flashed upon Broadway in the guise of a music show star of the first order.

Mrs. Beverly at last developed sufficient resistance to move as far as her desk, and from this vantage point to stare about her with an accretion of her misgiving. What would Karen say to this shabby room with the furniture battered up by her son's frequent attacks on it, the couch and chair coverings worn threadbare in places; no beauty, no distinction of any kind? She knew how the girl used to react to an ugly environment. Even the big desk—with its air of representing *something*,

at least, beyond the sordidly domestic—hardly redeemed the rest. She leaned her arms on it, and wished she had a cigarette within reach.

It was three years back that she had stopped smoking. The cigarette habit had commenced to levy too large a tax on her nervous strength; and starkly, one day, she had faced the fact that she must give up all these fictitious nerve releases, which were really nerve destroyers, if she wanted, in her scant hours of liberty, to be able to work at top pressure, and if she wanted, the rest of the time, to be a decent associate for her husband and child. She had that day faced the further fact that—for her, at least, situated as she was—artistic production meant the absolute sacrifice of practically all supernumerary activities outside of the essential offices demanded of her. All time-wasting interests, such as clothes, social engagements of any sort, even excessive time devoted to her baby, must be abandoned. She had accepted the situation, worked out a system for herself and hardly deviated from it since. . . .

So she had become a rigid ascetic, to such a degree that her environment had ceased to figure for her. The shabbiness and prosaicality which would once have galled her had become simply a part of that regular, not too disagreeable routine, her only escape from which were the hours she spent at her desk. In those hours she saw nothing, bruised her eyes on nothing farther off than—too often—the depressing blankness of the page in front of her. Nothing existed for her in the whole universe but the words which would ultimately pass out of her into type. . . .

But Karen could know nothing of all that. She would see only a dismal, essentially domestic interior, and a shoddy woman in the place of her former friend.

II

In those days—those delightful, irresponsible days of her intimacy with Karen, *she* had passed for brilliant too, if not even for exotic. Indeed, back there, it had been *her* personality, moody, dynamic, alert, that had keyed up the other and dominated her. It had been she who had first started the girl New Yorkward.

She could remember that evening when they had thrashed it out. Had Karen talent enough to justify her in defying her family, breaking free of their close orthodox circle, taking her small inheritance and going to New York alone? "You must go, Karen." She remembered her exact tone as she had said those words, the tense hand which she had laid on the other's trembling shoulder, her almost hypnotic effort to coerce that impressionable, nervous and erratic consciousness toward what she had strongly felt would be its only authentic release.

She had felt then that Karen's weird beauty wasn't simply a feminine loveliness. It seemed to keep drawing so on something inside; it was so untranquil, so little a matter of surface; so *organic*. She had realized from the first that the immature but vibrant voice, the restless sensibility, the emotional, high-strung, nervous temperament were all parts of a whole. Desperate parts on the surface, which at the bottom composed. The creative temperament in embryo!

So she had sent Karen to New York. A year later, against the latter's consent, she had married Karen's brother.

"You'll never be happy with him, Jean. He's too normal for you. What do you want with marrying anyway, you, an artist! John will never fit into a writer's life. He's wonderful, but he wants a house and kids and all that kind of thing. Come to New York, dear. Don't marry. I *know* you'll be miserable. I'd rather have John wretched. I would, really."

Well, what was Karen's reaction going to be now? What had *she* to show for her five years, as equivalent for the other's brilliant if not too fastidious success? She gripped her hands along the sides of her desk until her knuckles were white, and envisaged her artistic output. Two thin boxes of typescript, the frail, sifted contents of which were all that her five years had delivered. During

that period, here and there, in magazines more or less impecunious, her verses had appeared. Recently an obscure publisher in Boston had printed her still more carefully winnowed first collection of poems. No gain accrued to her, save that of being at last permitted to assert herself in print. That was all.

That, and little Sholes. What was Karen going to think of him? He was murmuring to himself in his bed now; Jean went in to him, and, kneeling beside the crib, buried her head against his chuckling, motile little body and sobbed.

III

"WHY, Jean darling, you don't rouge any more? Have you become so virtuous?"

It was the light, false tone which Jean's nerves recognized as being called in to cover the tension of a difficult meeting, to hide their mutual shrinking sensitiveness. However, the words hurt her. If Karen only knew how little money there was; none for clothes, let alone for expensive rouges and powders and scents. But that didn't mean that she herself was philistine. Couldn't the other apprehend that where a choice had to be made, one—in regard to all nonessentials — simply acquiesced? One saved one's nerves for the big fight. . . .

She stole a hasty, despondent glance at herself in the gilt mirror which had been Karen's wedding gift. She had never cast up before the exact extent of her deterioration. She *had* horribly changed. Her figure had slacked down into absolute scrawniness. Her face, unpointed by makeup of any kind, appeared utterly plain. If there was still a certain gleam to it, of intelligence, of sensibility, why that was only for the critical eye. The cheeks were lined and hollowed, and, what was worse, grayly pallid. The dark eyes, however, were still splendid, oppressively so in their utter, unrelieved prominence. But her once gorgeous hair was thin and lifeless; her lips were almost as pale as her cheeks. She had had no time to keep herself up, no energy. Couldn't Karen guess how those few but violent desk hours took it all? . . .

She clung to the girl a little emotionally, breathing in the sweet, familiar scent, resting her eyes on the other's beauty.

"You haven't changed, darling. Let me look at you; let me touch you."

She raised her hand to the little soft face in an old caress, and the other, feeling the hard flesh of it in place of its former suavity, drew it down and held it discontentedly in her immaculate, gloved palm.

"Jean, your beautiful hands! *What* have you done to them? Oh, how could you? What's the matter with you? I think I shall *hate* John."

After that the tension had steadily grown. They had both lunged dizzily for one wrong after the other. They were talking to each other finally with all the caution, the circumlocution of rather hostile strangers. Their voices rang false. The nerves of each were continually stiffening and tightening against the other's next attack.

Karen was wandering restlessly about the room, seemingly unable to sit down. When the other urged her to take off her wraps, she slipped out of her long red cape but clung to hat and veil and gloves as to a veritable shelter, a certificate of escape. It was on the same principle by which one buys a return ticket. This distrustful attitude hurt Jean, and put her, in her turn, on the defensive. They were both grappling painfully for the old common ground, and perpetually bringing up, instead, on harsh foreign surfaces of reserve and mere manner.

"But where is Sholes?" the prospective aunt finally asked. "I've brought him such a beautiful toy, all the way from New York. Isn't he shown? Is that contrary to schedule?"

"Oh, Sholes isn't scheduled any more. He's almost three, you know. However, I think he's asleep; I just put him to bed before you came. But I'll bring him out for a minute."

She came back with him a little

proudly and tremulously, for the child was very beautiful. . . . But to Karen he was simply a child, an unfamiliar genus. She raked him with her bright, curious glance, kissed him till he screamed, gave him the plaything, kissed him again and forgot him. Jean instantly bore him away.

When she returned she found that Karen had subsided, temporarily, on the couch. It was now her turn to be restless. She kept fumbling about, as if her own room were strange to her. Indeed she *was* seeing it with new eyes, Karen's eyes. Meanwhile she was racking her brain for some kind of entertainment to proffer her guest. She hadn't thought to provide so much as food or drink. In the old days they had both been impatient of all such things.

She stopped in front of her friend and really took her in for the first time. The girl was aggressively beautiful. She was dressed in some marvellous fabrication of dull brown, a scant, untrimmed but luxurious affair that fitted her figure like a glove. A little hat obliterated a portion of her too redundant hair; and a miraculous veil gave the final thrust to a beauty that seemed to lie low, in subtle lines and curves and receding black and white richnesses of colour. She was very much made up, but very perfectly. . . . Jean felt the old sensuous longing to take the precocious, exotic creature into her arms. For all her hurt sensibilities, she couldn't but love her and strain toward her still.

"Karen, how beautiful you are!"

Karen smiled. "I say, old dear, haven't you a cigarette on the premises?"

Jean gave a guilty start of annoyance. How could she have been so stupid, so shortsighted as to forget?

"Will you forgive me? I can get them in a minute. But you see it's all just pipes with John. And I had to give them up myself. Made me too nervous. And I can't afford any unnecessary nervousness."

She had reached the telephone, when she called back from there, "What is it, the old kind, Pall Malls?"

"Yes; king's size, if you don't mind."

Meanwhile Karen had risen and was poking about at her desk.

"Do you still write, Jean?"

The latter tried not to wince.

"You haven't read my book then? I thought I sent you a copy when it came out."

"Oh, yes; I remember now. I got it all right. And I did dip into it. Beautiful stuff, dear; but what's the good? It won't pay you ever, will it?" Then, catching a glimpse of the other's dismantled face: "However, I can't really discuss it with you. I haven't read enough of it yet. I'm saving it for a quiet stretch. I never seem to have any time of my own, these days. I don't usually get up till noon, and then there are a thousand things to do. Footless things, but they have to be done."

She yawned.

"The trouble with me to-day," she went on, "is that I got up at six, to catch that frightful first train. I can't remember when I've got up at such an hour before. . . . Six o'clock in the morning is an absolute anachronism unless you're asleep. I feel as though I hadn't been to bed since yesterday. You can't think how dependent I am on sleep. That's why I have on this hideous hat. I have a lovely one, a dream I just bought. But when I tried it on this morning, in that awful grey Chicago light, I jerked it off again. It looked so pitiful and out of place and absurd, just the way I did. It has spoiled my whole day, that dreadful glimpse I got of myself. I haven't looked in a mirror since. I even made up by *feel*. I must look dreadful; how can you call me beautiful?"

She sighted a photograph of herself on the mantelpiece, and instantly veered toward it in the haphazard manner that seemed to characterize most of her movements.

"Oh, Jean, I have a much better one, taken a month ago at Hill's. I'll send it to you, if you like. You must stand it up here, in place of that."

"I'm very fond of that one."

"Oh, but this other is marvellous.

You wouldn't know it for me. They've fixed me up so, given me so much *presence.*" She laughed. "It's only the gown. I've got the knack of dressing at least. I will say, old dear, I can do that very decently."

"I should think you could," Jean agreed.

"You know, there's a Russian attached to our company, a painter *soi-disant,* who wants to do me. I'd like to let him, because they say he's rather good."

"Why don't you?"

"Oh, I don't know. *Les scenes intimes!* He thinks, you see, that he's in love with me."

She flicked the ashes from her cigarette and leaned back with a stretch of her long, flexible body.

"I get so tired of their lovemaking."

"Karen, always, do you?"

"Yes, always. Except last winter for about a month. The man, however, was married. Rum go. But it's a silly asinine business from any standpoint. So enervating."

She laughed the low, cynical, slightly grating laugh which Jean had heard several times since she had arrived.

"Tell me about your play," she urged quietly.

"Oh, it's asinine, too. A typical Broadway production. Though I oughtn't to say so, since I'm allowed, for my sublime assistance, six hundred bucks a week. Don't come and see it, Jean. My part is contemptible. Nothing but clothes and smirking. I've only been at it three months and I'm dead sick of it already. Booked for over a year more, too. You see we have to give it to New York for a whole season. This trip's just the tryout . . . But at least one will be in New York. How I hate Chicago!"

Her eyes began roving again, and Jean was sure her body would soon follow. She dreaded, yet almost wished that the other would go. They were doing so badly.

"It's terribly uncomfortable, too, living this way. My New York apartment is a dream. I think it would satisfy even your fastidious taste. But this living in hotels is unbearable. Particularly these awful Chicago hotels. Nothing but dingy rooms and the most abominable service. I can't even get the right lipstick in this demented town. And it rains all the time. Oh, I can't *wait* to get through with this horrible tour, and back to New York. Jean, why don't *you* come to New York? How *can* you stick in a place like this year after year?"

The other seemed to have lost even her zest to resent things.

"Oh, it does well enough, for my work," she said.

"Your house is nice," Karen murmured. "Awfully lived in, isn't it? Those brass candlesticks are lovely. You ought to stand some sort of high red jar in between them. I saw just the one, yesterday, in a little curio shop. I'll send it to you."

"Oh, my dear, don't. It would be out of place. You see how shabby things are. They're better left."

"Are you so poor, Jean? I thought John was head of his department now. Didn't you write me? Salary bigger. His research work being printed in the *Journal of Morphology,* or something?"

Jean, for the first time, met her friend's eyes with a straight, level stare.

"Yes, John is doing brilliantly. In his line, he'll go very far, I imagine. He'll end with as big a reputation as Loeb's, perhaps. But what you forget, Karen, is that in our profession we never make any money. When you said you were getting six hundred a week, I wanted to laugh. We don't get, for the three of us, much more than that in two months. And yet one doesn't mind; one hardly thinks of it."

She had almost added, "Money comes to seem a little vulgar just as such." But this reflection she had checked, partly out of delicacy, partly from a doubt of its sincerity.

"Don't you make something with your writing?" Karen had become very sober.

"No; one doesn't make money writing poetry. One mostly even has to

print one's own stuff. You see, there aren't any George Cohans among the editors, ready to take a chance on me. I have to just bore my way."

"It's because what you write is something more than a pretty figure or a wistful smile. Oh, I know. Tell me, Jean, what you do all day? Hour after hour? Tell me."

The latter smiled at last; and the smile was as bitter as if she had followed her impulse, and let the hot, smarting tears stream down over her cheeks. "Very well, if it will amuse you. I get up anywhere from half-past six on."

Karen shuddered. "How atrocious! But why?"

"Necessity, my child. Sholes rises then; hence I."

"But the nurse?"

"My dear Karen, I have no nurse. It's only recently that I've been able to afford a maid . . . That may account to you for the condition of my hands."

"You mean you have actually cooked and scrubbed and all that? That's all right for some women, but *you*, Jean! It's like using mahogany for firewood."

"Well, I imagine it would burn all right. Anyway I cook pretty fairly. I've learned, since we knew each other. I can also iron and wash the baby's things."

"You have?"

"Yes, I have. I don't any more. Sholes is through with them. But to go on with my day . . . I rise at six-thirty and attend to my son. Then I endeavour to get John off. He's like you about getting up. After that, there's the housework until eleven, when Sholes gets bathed and fed again. Twelve to three is usually free time because he is sleeping then. In the afternoon he has to be walked out. There is sometimes an hour or so before dinner. Rarely, though. Some of the evenings are free for me. But I always have, absolutely assured, from eleven or thereabouts until one. I've been going on five hours' sleep a night for five years."

IV

KAREN yawned. "It's preposterous. You! If I believed that there ever was a human being one couldn't domesticate, you were that person. And now to come back and find you with your hands all frayed and your body tired and your nerve gone! Your day just a mess of little sordid details that a charwoman could attend to. And you *satisfied* to be like that!"

"You're overlooking a few of the details, aren't you, which a charwoman perhaps couldn't attend to?"

Jean's voice had been ominously gentle, but her friend hadn't bothered with its tone quality. However, her own mood suddenly changed, and she slurred from her previous didactic note.

"Perhaps, though, I envy you a little, minus the poverty. It must be nice to have a house, like other women, and a man and a child. Anyway, they say it is. *Is* it nice, Jean? But then," with another swift change, "of course you'd say so. Even if you didn't mean it. You've conformed."

Jean didn't deny this. "You haven't told me much about yourself. What do *you* do with your days? You act only at night, I suppose, and one or two matinées."

"Oh, I don't do anything worth the telling. You see, I don't take myself very seriously, I'm afraid. Hardly my work, any more. What's the use? . . . Well, I get up, my dear Jean, about noon. Then there is always, call it review of stock. Namely, my beautiful and highly important corporeal self to be attended to. Massage, manicure, hairdresser, dressmaker, all that business. It's very essential, in my case. It's my stock in trade, to a great extent. After that, whatever time is left I devote to amusement. The days go. I never have time for even the few things I still want to do . . . I scarcely read a newspaper any more. Intellectually, I'm absolutely outside the pale. She smiled again in that new, cruel fashion. Then she began fidgeting. "I'm afraid I'll

have to go soon. I must get back early this afternoon."

"You won't stay for lunch? John was counting on it."

"Oh, no; I can't. I'll probably be down again."

"Come down next Sunday. You don't play, do you, on Sunday? I'll have some people in. It won't be so tedious."

Karen overlooked the last implication. "Yes, we play on Sunday. Besides I hate meeting people. Especially *your* people. I wouldn't know what to talk to them about. I haven't any house or babies. Nothing but lovers, and they wouldn't like that."

For still another moment Jean's face remained taut. Then it broke for the rush of anger and hurt pride which she had been keeping back all the forenoon.

"Oh, they wouldn't mind hearing about your lovers, although they might regard such things as rather banal. . . . Most of the people that I know *do* things, write or paint or play. They'd very likely consider you as much of a philistine as you could possibly consider them. I'm even afraid that most of them would never have bothered to see a Broadway production, though they'd all try to pretend they had, for courtesy's sake."

Karen smiled.

"Yes, I see. I'd be only a Broadway actress, wouldn't I, to them? No great shakes, is it Jean, to be a Broadway actress? But then I've told you, I don't take my profession very seriously."

"Karen, why don't you?" After her outbreak Jean had stopped, frightened and ashamed. Also she had been checked by the tears that finally did well out over her cheeks, those tears of nervousness and excitement which she had been keeping back for some time. But at the girl's last words she forgot herself. Under the mockery of them, she had heard the note of pain. Karen was unhappy.

"Why don't you?" she insisted. "It's all there, pent up in you. Why are you willing to hold it in, for six hundred a week?"

"I'm *not* willing." The other's voice was grave now, and infinitely sad. "I do it; as you say. But I'm not willing. That's what you must understand."

With one of her old impulsive movements she was beside her friend with her arms about her. Jean could only cling. The wistfulness and passion of that face so near her own was so indescribably poignant.

"Jean, darling," the girl was saying, "we came perilously near quarrelling, didn't we, for the first time in our lives? Why was it? It was because we were both so on edge, wasn't that why? We both dreaded so this meeting."

Jean was still limply crying.

"It's nerves," she whispered. "You seemed so strange and gorgeous and out of reach. And so revolted by my mediocrity. I felt that I was almost repugnant to you, the way a cook would be or a nursemaid."

"*Jean!* . . . And I was afraid, too, don't you see? I was afraid of showing to you for what I am now, purely commercial. I don't so much mind, myself, but I couldn't bear to feel you judging me."

"We've both changed; that's inevitable." It was Jean's habitual, straight tone back again, in spite of the quaver. "You've become more beautiful if anything; and successful. You've made good. I've deteriorated; I've lost my hold on things, let go. I know it, dear. What I dreaded finding out was *how much* I'd let go of. And that, your loveliness, your words, your very silences have told me. I've *seen* myself this morning. I'm utterly commonplace; as you said, frayed. And rather ridiculous, I think. I've been taking myself so seriously. It's only a failure who needs to take himself seriously. I'm pretty much of a failure, I suppose. I believe I've suspected it a long time, but I've put off admitting it. And it was the fear of admitting it that made me so sensitive and on the defensive with you. Will you forgive me? Our divergence needn't alienate us, not if you don't mind."

"Jean, what are you saying?" The expressive listening face flooded with

earnestness; the voice flowed with a hundred overtones; all the flatness, the rasping cynicism was gone. It sounded at that moment, to the other woman, as the most beautiful voice she had ever heard. "For all your letting go, as you call it, there's one thing you've never let go of—your work. You've kept faith—with yourself... Don't you know what that means? You don't; but you would if you hadn't. I know. Oh, Jean, it's I who am the failure. Not you. All this means nothing."

She took in her appointments with a sweeping, scornful gesture. "Haven't I wished a thousand times that I were back where we both stood five years ago? But my line is different. I had to take what I could get. One *can* write in solitude, but one can't act. One must have an audience, a theatre. If you knew the months I spent in just beating it around from one manager to another. And I did turn things down, too, Jean. Vaudeville engagements. Tempting moving picture offers. But after a while, you think, what's the use? What's the use of having even a little talent if you have to keep it pent up inside you all the time? What becomes essential to an actress after a while is a chance to act. Any chance. And when you get to that point, you use any means, too. You're grateful for your good figure or your pretty face or whatever it is that finally puts you across. And you make the most of them. You *trade* on them. You can't help doing it . . . Oh, Jean, I wish you'd understand. I *want* you to understand. I want to explain it all to some one. And to myself. I've pressed it all back for so long."

"Go on, dear; tell me . . . As if I didn't understand."

"By that time the virus is in you and it starts working. You have to dress to get a new part. Not only dress, but keep up, you know. And to do that, you have to make money. So that you have to take a part that will pay. And then after a while you can't do without the money and all the accessories you've become dependent on. And so you fall into the regular life. You learn to jolly the managers and flirt with the stage directors and sneak yourself in on top of someone else. It's all sickening, but you get used to it; and that's what's most sickening of all. It's a vicious circle. I've wished again and again that I could start over, start differently. But of late, it's only in the night sometimes, when I can't sleep, or out in the park on some specially nice day; or in a bookshop perhaps, that I feel that awful gnawing of regret. And it stops very quickly. I have to hurry back for some appointment or other. I forget it. And then, presently, I'm back in the game again, with no way out. Don't you see? Oh, Jean, in a sense I'm done for."

"Dear Karen!"

"Only yesterday I was thinking about you. I went into McClurg's. The very thought that I was coming down here made me want to be a little less illiterate, not quite so vulgar. And then while I was wandering among all those books, like a lost soul, not even knowing what counter I wanted to go to, I realized how frightful it is to spend money week after week, such heaps of it, just for food and clothes, and not a cent on anything of real value . . . lend me some books, Jean, will you?"

"I'll lend you anything I possess, my darling, that you want. But Karen, now that you've made your tally, put it over or whatever it is called, made a name for yourself, now dear, why not begin? . . . Begin, I mean, to do *your* special work on the stage. Even if it isn't remunerative, just at first. Please, Karen."

It was the old, urgent voice, the old probing gaze of those intense, ascetic eyes, the old hypnosis. Karen felt it and submitted to it, as she had always done.

"Help me to, Jean. When I am with you I almost feel that I could. You see what it would mean is that I should have to go into stock, or God knows what dreary work for a while. And I haven't saved a cent. I shouldn't have anything to live on but the measly little salary they would pay me. . . . I've thought of it . . . at night . . . but in the morning I know I never shall. I can't

live now without all these traps. I can't seem to breathe any more outside of New York. And to go off to some dingy hole and drudge. Just for a problematical success. I *never will* do it. Not unless you were to come with me, and stand over me all the time. Then I believe I could. Will you come with me, Jean?"

V

THERE was a long pause. It seemed almost as though the other wanted to consent. She stretched out a thin hand from which the marks of physical labour hadn't been able to obliterate that sensitive, tenacious look of the ascetic, the artist.

"How can I? There's my work, and John."

Karen felt for her gloves and began drawing them on. "No, we shall just go our ways, I suppose."

"We shall have to go our ways."

The girl walked over to the mirror, and, raising her veil, touched up her cheeks and lips.

"Give me your book, dear," she called over her shoulder. "I lied to you; I haven't got it. I lost it somewhere. But I want to read to-night."

She came back, artificial and striking as ever, yet with, under it all, a sadness that was for the other woman a sharp pang.

"You'll promise to come back?"

Karen held her again, very close, totally indifferent as to what damage such caresses should inflict on her just perfected ensemble.

"Probably I shan't. But I shall think of you. . . . It's been all right, hasn't it, after all?"

"I shall think of you," was all Jean could find to answer. "I shall come and see your play."

"Come if you like; I don't mind now. But you'll hate it; so why bother?"

She wrapped herself in her long red cape, with no further glances toward the mirror.

"Kiss Sholes for me. Tell him his aunt Karen will send him a great rocking horse to-morrow." . . . At the door she turned again for one of her clairvoyant tender flashes. "Don't sit down and brood, Jean. Remember the precious moments. Make a poem of this. After all, it will have served some purpose then. And don't worry. We shall just go our ways. Good-bye, old dear."

THE TEACHER

By Evelyn Wells

HIS books had taught him the breadths of space,
The distance from sun to sun,
Of night-pools gutted with slag of worlds,
Of races the wild stars run.

Yet he had not known the meaning of space,
Changeless, endless, and dim,
With its shroud of terror and lonely deeps,
Till he found She had gone from him.

WANTS OF WOMEN

By E. E. Boylan

IN Taimati the women wear but a skirt woven of the white flower of Hate, blossoming forever near the spring Vannak.

* * *

And on those other islands just where the day begins even the queen Janneth's pale daughters are content with skins of the desert lion brooding beyond the gates.

* * *

Yea—the dawn-haired peasant girls of Torreg seek lovers tinted in nine colours, but ask for clothing only the soft bark of those lone-standing trees in the three broad forests of Quipo.

* * *

I am enhungered for a woman more fair. But she will have none of these.

Rather she asks fabric of gray spider silk from the loom of the blind weaver of Chi-san, who toils, even as his fathers' fathers, only during the eclipse, though the rice jar be empty for months.

* * *

Also she would have a cloak of flame-tipped feathers, each from the breast of a bird that sang in the time-forgotten gardens of Halcynthus, before Death came.

* * *

And for her small feet, thus is she fain. From the metal of star-dust, not to be bought except with Honour; and from that jewel known to poets, found in Tarn Torové at the foot of Hurtled Hills, him of Viralta that made the petals of the flower of Night shall fashion sandals and shoon.

* * *

Much more would she. I am but a poverty-stricken young man and must travail in Chi-san and among those tribes of Korros who hold the plumage of Halcynthus at high ransom. And I must seek stardust at all costs and the dark Tarn Torové and the artisan of Viralta.

* * *

But if there be fair women and pleasant smiles in those lands through which I shall journey, mayhap I shall forget her of many desires, and while fulfilling their wishes suffer other lovers —if such there be—to venture and return from the edge of Time.

THE DROLL SECRET OF MADEMOISELLE

By Maurice Davies

I

MONSIEUR, his violin case tucked under one tight-sleeved arm, stood gazing up at the house from what was a novel angle of inspection for him—the outside. He was so well acquainted with the interior that it struck him now he had given very little attention to the house *ab extra*, and he continued to gaze at it.

Standing there in silent, rigid contemplation he was reminiscent of a ghost figure long since gone from the proscenium, not only of the stage, but of the world: the antiquated tragedian of the plug hat era. In other moments Monsieur was not strikingly like anything in particular, save that he was as unlike a Frenchman as he was like the music show comedian's impersonation of one.

The street in which he stood in so rapt contemplation was like a well-cut sleeve of fashion and quality which had broken through its selvage and frayed a little. Toward Fifth Avenue it had been obliged to retain and maintain its cut and quality, but a thread in the middle of the block had worn somewhat and had given the sleeve a shabby appearance as it stretched out toward Sixth Avenue. Before arriving here it picked up more threads which became interwoven in a varicoloured and desultory pattern and passed residences that were not of either pattern, appearing to be in a perennial state of vacillation over the right way to turn for salvation.

The house that Monsieur stared at was one of these.

It was an old-fashioned, gabled dwelling hinting at much roominess within. It stood alone, and in the open spaces to either side one could see high dormer windows. In the front there was a slight but incontestable deformity. It was a missing porch rail in the wide, circular railing that encompassed the porch. With this tooth gone the railing had a snagly grin for the sedate row of private houses to the left—toward Fifth Avenue—and a slightly superior grin for the row of private houses to the right with no pretensions whatever.

Beyond the railing a light shone through the curtains of the three tall windows leading off the porch. In the middle window was a neat white glass sign, telling in neat black script of the business carried on within the house. The script read:

Mademoiselle Flaubesseau
Coiffeuse Tonsorial
Cheveux

In the window to the right, in the space between the pane and the curtain, was a pedestal on which rested a wax bust of a girl with bobbed hair; in the other hung switches, braids, spread hair, rolled hair, blond hair coiffured and brunette hair hanging in an abortive state verging on a golden hue.

Monsieur, probably because he had never before contemplated all this from the outside, was conscious of a curious sensation as he continued to regard the neat little sign. The mild little fiction of the "Mademoiselle," for instance, had never before struck him so forcibly in quite its present light of understatement of the case.

For a few moments he stared at the

sign, then resolutely walked up to the steps, mounted them gracefully and stood before the heavy walnut doors. In spite of himself—and fortified by the knowledge that no customers were in the shop—he punched the bell a little timidly. The result was as he expected.

Mademoiselle herself, a large, active woman with a rosy-pink countenance suggestive of excellent living, and hair that was ultra-flaxen by virtue of Mademoiselle's chemistry, opened the door.

"*Ola!* it ess *you.*"

"*Oui*—it ees me."

"*Ha! Qu'est-ce?*"

"Cosette, I would talk."

"*Oui*—I know it, *M'sieur.* It ees all you do—talk. If you would work like an Amerikeen husband we would be of no difference. But you weel not. Thees morning I told you all. It is enough. You will not work, *M'sieur?* You will hug and tickle the girls who come here, *M'sieur? Ola!* we shall see, *M'sieur!*"

"It ees not so, my darling."

"Ah! I see. Thees girl's neck—she was cold, eh? You had the arm around to make the neck comfortable, eh, *M'sieur?*"

Monsieur hesitated but an instant. In his composition there was a deal of the courtly. Not only were his manners elegant, but he had a certain personal charm, and along with these, as the Dutchman, his friend who kept the eating-house round in Sixth Avenue, often told him, he "could say something."

"Cosette, my love, you dear, you have no idea of the artist. You know not of the suffering—"

"*Diable! I* know nothing of the suffering! Ha!"

She moved to close the door.

"My precious Cosette! Hear, my love, what I am to say."

"*Se sauver.* I hear enough."

"You love me not, my darling Cosette?" he asked a little anxiously.

"If *M'sieur* weel have the truth I weel tell heem that I have lost the desire for heem. *Voilà ce que c'est.*"

"But maybe Madame would—*eh!*—*eh*—if M'sieur would not tell her secret. *Bien, eh?*"

"I am not afraid, *M'sieur.*"

And before Monsieur could utter another syllable the heavy walnut doors came to in a jointure that three men and a boy might have been proud to pry asunder.

Back on the sidewalk Monsieur took another glance at the house and then consulted his timepiece, an old dollar watch. It wanted a few minutes of eleven o'clock. As he was without funds, clearly he saw he was doomed to wander the streets all night long. Already the neighbourhood was showing signs of desertion. A man walking down the pavement on the opposite side of the street produced something of a racket with his heels, and the echo sent a sudden chill of loneliness into Monsieur's heart. The sounds of the other's heels seemed to tramp the truth more firmly on Monsieur's consciousness: *he had been put out.* That M'sieur of the non-rubber heels was in all likelihood going home to a warm bed. Lucky gentleman!

He confessed concern to himself. Of course he had had differences with Cosette—oh, many, many times—and had been threatened with homelessness as many times, but this was the most decisive step she had ever taken. All evening he had searched for some sort of reasonable compromise, and had given up. He had come merely in curiosity to see if his last recourse would effect anything. He was satisfied now. *Vraiment!* hadn't she confessed to having lost the appetite for him? When a woman loses the appetite for one, clearly it is not the time to go on.

He gave one last look at the house. A gloomy mass of mystery it was to the passer-by—but *he* knew its secret. Suppose others were to learn—his heart gave a sudden leap as he realized that he alone was in possession of the key to the dénouement of the whole thing—he alone knew what went on behind those formidable walnut doors. Surely she would come to terms before the night was through.

II

SLIPPING the violin case a little more snugly under his arm, Monsieur made his way along the quiet street to Sixth Avenue. Here it was not so remindful of his predicament, as the night life was merely beginning. He rounded the corner and went down a few doors, thoughtfully entering the Dutchman's.

Most of the Dutchman's business prowled in after midnight, and so the place was very nearly deserted. At one side, near the corner, Monsieur observed two old men playing checkers on a board painted on the oilcloth covering of the table; farther along he saw the Dutchman himself, who was alone with an assistant. Monsieur sat down, placing his hat on a rack over the mirror at his side and the violin case on the adjacent chair.

"*Café*," he told the assistant, bowing recognition.

In a moment the Dutchman strolled up and dropped into the seat opposite.

"How is everythin', Henri?"

Monsieur shook his head.

"Not so good, *M'sieur*."

"How is the Missus?"

"Terrible."

"Eh? Sick?"

"Of me, *M'sieur*—yees. Verree sick."

The waiter brought the cup of coffee and departed. Monsieur stared meaninglessly at the steaming beverage, idly stirring it with a lead spoon.

"Henri, you look outta sorts," the Dutchman, a big, jovial, moon-faced fellow, told him, narrowly scanning Monsieur's countenance.

"No, no. It ees so droll. I was thinking how droll it ees."

"Droll, eh?" the Dutchman sympathized, having not the vaguest idea of the malady which so affected his friend. "It is, eh?"

For some time Monsieur stared ahead. At last, however, he turned with something of a smile. When Monsieur smiled it was worth while. His brows went up and he looked from the tail of his eye.

"The secret of *la maison, M'sieur*. Aha! she has not the knowledge that I know. All the time that I play in my room—all the time I spend with the masters, with thees Paganini, thees De Beriot, thees Brahms, thees Fiorilla—she theenks I am so busy I am blind. No, no, *M'sieur*, I have knowledge of what has been going on in that house. A terrible house, *M'sieur*—but so droll."

The Dutchman favoured this bit of intelligence with a glance that invited more.

"Yer don't say?" he commented.

"*Diable! Le* secret police ought to know! *Ola!*"

"There's no murder in it, yer don't suppose?"

"*Non*—no, no—it ees worse."

The Dutchman squirmed a little in his seat and hitched his chair up closer to the table edge.

"Now, what do yer suppose—"

"*M'sieur*—have you heard—what you call heem?—the blind animal?"

The Dutchman looked completely baffled at this.

"'The blind animal?'" he echoed.

"Or what—I cannot theenk of heem—what you call heem? The sightless tiger? That ees it! The sightless tiger, *M'sieur!*"

"Yer mean a blind tiger?"

"*Voilà*. Thees ees indeed heem!"

"What about it?"

"She has heem."

The Dutchman whistled softly.

"Yer don't say! I can hardly believe it. It's a wonder the cellar smellers didn't get her before this. Say, I wonder if you could bargain for a bottle of—"

"No, no, M'sieur Dutch. I have been—what you call?—shown of the gate. It ees so curious, *M'sieur*—so droll!"

"And so that hair-scalping joint is just a curtain for the tiger, eh?"

"It ees nonsense. One, two customers—maybe three. But in the cellar, *M'sieur*—aha! the customers are much Chartreuse, a leetle—champagne—port, but whisky! M'sieur, I have been down to the cellar, but thees was not *necessaire*. *La maison*—it has no secret inside. It ees of a tremendous smell."

The Dutchman nodded, still a trifle dazed with the import of the disclosure.

"And now, what d'yer suppose—"

"Ah, at midnight, *M'sieur*, I give her one chance more to tell me she cares for me not quite so less. She may not let me in—" Here Monsieur raised his brows and looked through the tail of his eye—"and that would be droll."

He concluded with a sagacious nod and an expression whose ominous subtlety prophesied no little ill fortune to Mademoiselle Flaubesseau.

"Well, well," the Dutchman finally ventured. "The Missus is a live one, all right. The profits must be *e*-normous. I was only talking to her this morning and never suspected a thing. She's a great one."

"Ees it not droll?"

"Well," the other replied, scratching his sandy head, "leastways, it isn't dry."

Monsieur nodded less energetically than was his wont and glanced up at the clock which hung on the rear wall. The hands were close to midnight. He rose, reached for his black alpine and picked up the violin case.

"I go now, *M'sieur*. I may be back—who know?—and she may let me in. Perhaps I see you again, *M'sieur*."

III

THE street was even more quiet when Monsieur, violin case under arm, again turned into it than it had been when he left it. Leisurely he strolled down the block until the brown wooden house was reached. The porch rail still had its snagly grin, but *Ola!* it now had something to grin about! The secret hidden in the quiet and gloom of that house!

Earlier in the evening Monsieur had only remotely thought of converting the secret he possessed into a sword of Damocles which he might keep in a perennial state of suspension over Cosette's flaxen head, but now he saw that, aside from being droll, it was more than a mere sword of Damocles: it was a fulcrum on which his happiness of the future would turn. Cosette, once having heard him through, would be agreeable.

He mounted the steps decorously, revealing nothing of exultance in his manner, although he may have hugged the violin case more tightly to his lean ribs. Clearly Cosette's power to keep him out of doors was waning—was indeed a prerogative of the past. With this interesting reflection he rang the bell and held his breath as it echoed hollowly within the depths of the still house.

He waited. There was no response. He rang again and again without hearing an answering sound within, save the echo. Finally, however, a window round to the side was thrown up violently, and in quest of this he descended the porch steps with a deal of haste, moving round to the open space flanked by the beginning of a row of private houses.

"*Mon Dieu!*—it ees *you!*"

Monsieur heard the words before he saw the pink boudoir cap that was thrust out of a window on the first floor, several feet beyond his reach. There he stood, instrument under his arm, like an ill-tempered troubadour come to serenade a disagreeable lady.

"*Oui*—it ees me," he confessed in subdued tones, fearful of arousing the neighbours.

"*Mon Dieu!*—you might let people sleep."

"*Oui, oui*—if but my darling Cosette would see that I might sleep."

"What ees it you want, idiot?"

"The key, my precious—"

"*Partir, s'en aller*—"

"Come, come, Madame, it ees not time for nonsense. I may help Madame—eh!—with thees key by telling what I know of her so droll secret?"

"How you say?"

"Ha, ha, Madame, the secret of *la maison*. Thees droll smell."

"*Allons donc!* I am not afraid, *M'sieur*. Thees house is honest."

"*La, la*, Madame, you jest."

"Away, *M'sieur*, or I will have the police on you."

"Do so, Madame, do so. The animal

may be blind, but M'sieur is not so. *Ha!* You understand? You will now have thees key?"

"*Non*—"

"Thees last time I ask, Madame." Monsieur spoke up ominously.

"*Non*—"

"Theenk well."

"*Non*—"

"Verree well. Madame shall see."

The window was slammed down with what struck Monsieur as unwarranted violence and noise. For some moments he stood silent, shaking a tightly-clenched fist at the point where he had last seen the pink boudoir cap. At last, however, realizing that this was futile, he turned abruptly, retraced his steps to the gate and reached the sidewalk.

Back on Sixth Avenue he made his way southward for a few blocks, then turned into a side street going west. Finally he came to a graystone building that looked like a small cathedral, save for the two green lights that burned so luridly at either side of the entrance steps.

Mounting these steps with all the intrepidity at his command he pulled open a massive door and entered, finding an officer at an elevated desk behind a wooden railing. The man had been humming unconcernedly, but broke off long enough to ask Monsieur what it was he wished.

"Verree quiet, M'sieur."

"Eh? Confidential—that it?"

"*Oui*—a blind—what you call—thees tiger."

"Oh!" the lieutenant interjected; and following a short interval, "*Oh*—so you're a cellar-smeller?" He rose, the better to peer over the desk for a more liberal view of Monsieur.

"How you say, *M'sieur?*"

"I say, you're reporting a blind still, eh? Good for you."

The lieutenant picked up a pen.

"Where's this joint, Misheer?"

Briefly Monsieur described the location.

"A-a-l right, Misheer. We'll look into it. Thanks. Good-night."

IV

It was a fine evening and the Dutchman had stepped outside his restaurant for a breath of fresh air and a look at the stars through the intersections of the elevated road hard overhead. He had not taken many breaths when Patrolman Cassidy came along.

"Hi, there, Dutch," came the patrolman's festive greeting, delivered in a solemnly grave voice.

"How are yer, Cass? What's new?"

Patrolman Cassidy checked the gyrations of his nightstick.

"Nothing much. Did yer hear about the Frog around the corner?"

"What's that?"

"His case came up in court this morning. The lieutenant was down and was telling me about it. Funny about that Frog—wasn't it?"

"How'd it come out?"

"He got three months on the Island."

"Yer don't say?"

"He'd 'av got more, only the judge knowed that he'd confessed and took that into consideration. The lieutenant sez that the judge told the Frog it was his own conscience that saved him from getting three years a-stead of three months. 'If yer own conscience,' the judge sez, 'hadn't troubled yer into telling us when we didn't know anything about yer, yer'd 'av gone up for years. For listening to yer own conscience I'm gonna go light on yer,' the judge told him."

"Yer don't say?" reiterated the Dutchman somewhat abstractedly. "And what about Henri's Missus?"

"Well, yer see, as the judge explained, a man is responsible fer his wife's debts and her mistakes in business—leastways, where they is no criminal intent. Still, funny, ain't it, that that Frog confessed that way?"

The speaker was met with a curious silence.

"Nice night," Patrolman Cassidy suggested, glancing up at the stars.

The Dutchman did not reply at once. He appeared to have sunk into a curious abstraction. Even Patrolman

Cassidy, although not generally observant, noted and wondered over the Dutchman's immersion in the realm of thought. At last, however, the latter slowly lifted up his glance to the stars. He contemplated them long and earnestly, as if fascinated. He was. His wits were painfully slow movers, but it had suddenly dawned on him why stars wink.

THE GREAT DON JUAN

By John F. Lord

HE was a cosmopolitan. He had travelled the world over. He had met girls in many lands, had spoken to them, had flirted with them, had wooed them. Some had answered shyly, some openly. The answers ranged all the way from *non* to *nein*.

WILD THOUGHT

By John Hall Wheelock

SURF of Song upon my heart
Breaks for ever where thou art.

The dark ocean in my breast
Of wild love may never rest.

Still one thought upon her shore
Breaks in dream for evermore.

THE sad part of a woman-hater's life is that in one afternoon he meets more pretty girls than he can hate for the rest of his mortal existence.

"I LOVE" and "I marry" are both sentences. The difference is that "I marry" is a life sentence.

MEN only become famous by concealing their indiscretions. Women, by parading them.

AT THIRTY-THREE

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

I

SUZANNE WHITTIER stared into her drawing-room fire and sipped black coffee. It was late. The slam of motor doors outside was no longer incessant; the sharp sound was growing so infrequent that she started each time it came to her. Obviously, only a few belated revellers were lingering on at the gay restaurant across the street.

Suzanne was melancholy. She hated lonely vigils; she might at that moment have been the sole surviving inhabitant of New York. She stirred her coffee, sighed and shivered a bit. No matter how cozy and warm the room, she always felt chilled when she sat up alone at unconscionable hours.

To-night she had determined not to give way to sleepiness till she had reached a decision; she meant to wake up in the morning with her future clear before her. For the past year, things had become too problematical to be pleasant. Fortified by her black coffee, Suzanne was about to reach a conclusion so definite as to make any future darting back on her traces preposterous.

She was on the brink of matrimony; that she knew. The problem for her at present was not whether she should marry or continue her old independent career; it was rather *whom* she should marry. Two men desired her. To-morrow she would accept one of them.

She regretted passionately, as she sat there, that she had delayed matters so long; ten years ago she would have been able to arrive at a swift conclusion by merely consulting her heart. She was thirty-three now, however. Incli-

nation found itself opposed by hard common sense; a whole night of stealthy wakefulness would be necessary to thresh the thing out.

Suzanne had devoted the previous day in equal portions to the rival swains: she had lunched with Gregory Curtis and had had tea with him later at his rooms; Edward Tompkins had claimed her for dinner and the evening. Had she allowed her emotions to sway her, she would have chosen Curtis at once. She was aware that, as his wife, she would soon fall in love with him as helplessly and nonsensically as any schoolgirl.

Without difficulty, she could visualize herself in her new position—unreasonable, adoring, the man's abject slave, with the vision of her old freedom to vex her, with the crash of her self-respect to infuriate her, with the jealous need of keeping him hers at any cost to amaze her and make her wretched.

Curtis loved her, of course; he and she were of the same sphere, as near intellectual equality as a man and woman could be. Well, once they were married, his actual superiority would become appallingly obvious; he would assume control, he would make harsh demands, and she, in her silly infatuation, would soon lose her identity and degenerate into the spiteful, irksome creature that must needs submit, but never with a good grace.

That situation might be all right for a young wife; but for a sophisticated woman it would be exasperating. A *conventional* marriage—the union would resolve itself into that; and Suzanne had come to realize more and more as time went on the dismal, dreary futility, for a proud woman, of the usual conjugal

relation. Unhealthy, sickening—the epithets couldn't be made too strong to describe the facts of the case. Curtis was a man of the finest stamp; indeed, he was quite the most admirable and fascinating person she had ever known. *Why* hadn't she married him a decade ago? Well, she hadn't, and it was too late now to think of submitting to his exactions, to dream of embroiling herself in the moods and tortures of a furious affection.

Tompkins was different; marriage to him would mean an end of all financial worries—and it would mean little else. Suzanne liked the chap; his incurable boyishness, his rough-and-tumble methods were refreshing in their way. Besides, for all his bearishness, he was magnificently imposing; he quite dwarfed the slender, nervous Curtis, when it came to a physical comparison.

Unlimited money, physical glamour—Suzanne saw with decided keenness the attractive qualities of the combination. For her, however, the great asset lay in the fact that *she* would rule, as Tompkins' wife, that she would carry on her life with all the high-handed independence she had found so invigorating in the years she had run her own establishment. The man worshipped her as a creature of more than earthly perfections; he was, as it were, in a perpetual genuflexion before her and would accept her decrees through all the future years as hallowed utterances that it would be sacrilegious to question. Yes, without a doubt Tompkins was the comfortable, the unperplexing candidate.

Suzanne, with a pang as of renunciation, let her thoughts rest now on Curtis. How would he take her acceptance of the other man? Ah—she knew; she saw his clear, fine eyes with an ironic twinkle in them. He would raise his brows ever so delicately, smile in all politeness, then bring his lips together in a thin line of hostility. By her decision, she would prove to him how little, after all, she was worth. They would continue to be casual friends; they would dine together, lunch together, have delightful chats.

Married to the coarse-grained Tompkins, she'd need more than ever the intellectual stimulation Curtis could communicate. Still, things wouldn't be the same. She wouldn't count with him in future; and she had always so relished his air of respect, of polite fervour! Virginia Phayre's designs on him had ever amused Suzanne; one of the sweetest satisfactions in the past had been Virginia's helplessness. Now—but she must be reconciled to his marrying the other woman at some vague future date.

Suddenly, Suzanne sprang up from her chair.

"That silly fool—that simpleton!"

A crash of china that echoed in the stillness like bursting shrapnel brought her a pause. She had smashed her coffee-cup.

Suzanne, standing in the middle of the room, broke into a low laugh.

"If that's the way I feel now," she reflected shrewdly, "what a jealous vixen I should be in six months!"

She dropped to her knees and, while she gathered up the fragments, announced half-aloud in a tone of inspired conviction, "Of course, it's *got* to be Ned Tompkins!"

II

"THERE's no sense in glossing things over, you know. Simple, coarse as the devil and straightforward—that's marriage, as I see it. It doesn't pay to be finicky. The more primitive and unlovely the business is, the *safer* it is. The minute a man or woman goes in for subtle reservations and delicate shadings, the element of danger appears. It's no time for diplomacy, Suzanne. A husband and wife belong to each other, that's all there is to it. I'm *part* of you now, just as much as your teeth or your ears are."

They were spending the first week of their married life at Tompkins' Long Island place. Suzanne sat on the balustrade of the porch that let out from her bedroom; for a moment, she weighed her husband's words without comment. In apparent abstractedness, she sur-

veyed the blue Sound and whistled an arpeggio softly.

Tompkins, lounging beside her, watched her with a keen intensity. Suzanne refused to meet his eyes; she turned her back deliberately to him and, leaning forward with impulsive rashness, broke off two or three blossoms from the topmost boughs of the magnolia tree just beneath the balcony. Tompkins grasped her firmly by the shoulders and laid his cheek with clumsy tenderness against hers.

"Thank you," she said with studied carelessness when she had gathered her immense bouquet. She freed herself and buried her face in the blooms. Then, letting them tumble pell-mell into her lap, she confronted him.

"You really can't expect me to share your views, Ned," she remarked. "I belong to myself, not to you. Marriage *doesn't* change things nowadays. I'm thirty-three, remember; I've lived my own life so long that I shall have to go on consulting myself first in everything. I can be coarse, I suppose, but I can't be simple."

He dropped down beside her on the balustrade; with his face close to hers, he regarded her intensely.

"Do you think I'll let you lead your own life now?" he asked. "It's out of the question, I tell you. You're mine, Suzanne; you belong to me, not to yourself."

She shrugged uneasily and closed her eyes.

"I married you, because I wanted to keep my freedom," she told him. "I was sure that you, of all people, would see the absurdity of trying to make me over."

She paused.

"Well—" she wound up at length, "I still intend to keep my freedom."

"But you don't understand!" He was patient. "I don't mean to rule *you* and do as I please myself. Not a bit of it! You're to give up everything but me and I'm to give up everything but you. That's logical, that's sane. We devote our entire life to each other—and throw overboard every old association."

Suzanne smiled vaguely as she listened to the laboured plea.

"You mean by that, of course," she reminded him, "that it's up to me to throw Gregory Curtis overboard. Nothing will induce me to do such a thing. I need him quite as keenly now as I did a week ago. You're a dear, Ned, I'm not denying it; but I should go insane if there was nobody else to talk to. Do you think for a moment we should be happy? No, no!"

Tompkins threw an arm about her shoulders and drew her to him. When he spoke, it was in a tone of decision.

"I'm not so damned convincing at argument, but I know what's right. You're my wife; you've got to take me as I am, you've got to know me as you've never known anything before."

His arm tightened its hold; Suzanne shivered a little and opened her eyes. They contemplated each other for a long moment.

"Look at me, Suzanne," he murmured. "Do you think for an instant you'll lead your own life? Do you think you belong to *yourself?*" His voice rose to a jubilant, triumphant note. "Why, you little fool, you'll see nothing but me till your dying day; you'll see nothing but me, whether I'm drunk or sober, whether I'm awake or asleep, whether I'm decent or low. And you'll grow to love it, Suzanne. We'll keep back nothing from each other. You'll learn what's fine in me, you'll learn what's bad; and you'll give back as good as I send, before you've done. That's marriage—actually. Men are a vulgar lot; once you accept that, you'll be happy."

Suzanne, swept off her feet and into his arms, trembled uncontrollably. She had neither the strength nor the desire now to combat him. Before his lips closed on hers, however, she had forged the resolve to give battle directly they had returned to New York.

III

THEY went to an hotel for the Spring months. Suzanne had insisted on an extravagant refurbishing and a thorough scouring of Tompkins' ugly house.

"It reeks of tobacco and decaying horse-hair," she had told him. "It's dreadful."

Tompkins had acquiesced blithely.

At the end of the first week, Suzanne had accomplished much. With the oil-paintings, in particular, she had been brutal.

"Now, Ned!" she remarked one morning. "We must get rid of these Gerômes and Bouguereaus. Present them to the Metropolitan—or to some club where you're influential enough to inflict a few tortures—"

Tompkins was obedient. He scurried about and a few days later announced in triumph:

"I've found a rather smart dealer who'll take the whole lot, I think. I'm to meet him at the house to-morrow evening and show him around."

"I say, Suzanne," he remarked at dinner that night, "I hope you won't be lonesome without me. These Jewish chaps do wrangle like the devil. I may not get home till all hours."

She smiled. "Oh, I shall manage beautifully. Gregory Curtis and I are dining together. My wedding interrupted a fascinating game of chess; Gregory and I'll finish it at his rooms to-morrow night."

Tompkins said nothing for a moment. Then:

"Of course you don't mean it," he ventured.

"Indeed I do," she returned. "I can't ever hope to live up to your ideas about marriage, Ned. There's no sense in my trying it. I told you I meant to keep my freedom; the sooner I prove it to you the better."

Tompkins stared at his plate.

Suzanne, breathing more freely now that she had won her point, gave the conversation a veer.

"I'll be so glad to see the last of those pictures," she said. "You don't know how they've depressed me. The very thought of being on intimate terms with all those naked French nymphs! Really, how *could* people—?"

Tompkins interrupted her.

"What in hell does he take me for, anyhow? Of course, I don't blame you, Suzanne; women are always a bit indiscreet. But that's all the more reason why decent men should be careful. It's simply an insult!"

"Oh, Ned, will you be sensible?" Suzanne wailed. "It isn't Gregory's fault. I planned it; he couldn't have got out of it to save his neck."

"Couldn't have got out of it!" Tompkins mocked. "Good Lord, Suzanne, don't think I'm an idiot."

He turned his attention to his salad; with his mouth full, the urge to speech seized him once more. He mumbled out something.

"What is it?" Suzanne leaned forward politely.

"Oh, nothing!" Tompkins replied. As a matter of fact, his unintelligible words had been, "What the devil does he take me for? What the *devil*—"

The remainder of dinner was quite uneventful and rather dreary.

When they had returned to the drawing-room, Tompkins paced up and down for a time. Suzanne lit a cigarette and, smoothing her gown daintily, sank down on the divan. She piled the pillows up first one way and then another; she snuggled into them, burrowing vaguely with her nose, then raised herself on one elbow and tried a new arrangement. She gave a pat here and a touch there; at last, in weary vexation, she swept the whole lot of cushions over the edge and nestled in a denuded corner.

"What fiend do you suppose invented hotel divans?" she wondered half-aloud.

Tompkins ignored the flippant question. He strode over to her and sat down heavily beside her.

"I'll have to ask you to do something for me," he said.

"You want me to put Gregory off." She considered it. "And if I refuse, Ned? Wouldn't you be in rather a fix then? Wouldn't that tie your hands—and make you seem a bit silly? Heaven help the man who appears a fool in his wife's eyes!"

"There's no danger!" he told her. "I'm not averse to using force, you see.

I don't think I'd look such a fearful ass if it came to that."

Suzanne mused.

"Oh, but you would, Ned!" she decided at length. "A *fearful* ass!"

They laughed.

Suzanne, drawing her slippered feet under her, turned abruptly and faced her husband.

"This sounds absurd and infantile," she said, "but it's really a big moment. It shows, you understand, that I do intend to control my own destiny."

"You little fool! As if you had a chance!" Tompkins fixed his blazing eyes on her. Of a sudden he bent forward, grasped her shoulders and tumbled her backwards off the divan and into the inviting nest of cushions. Tangled in the mazes of her train, she struggled helplessly, furiously, to get up. Tompkins, with a burst of merriment, caught her as she half rose and imprisoned her between his knees. He threw an arm about her neck and pressed his hand against her mouth. Then he reached for the telephone on the table directly back of the divan.

After he had sent in his call, he contemplated his wife grimly. She writhed in an unavailing frenzy; her cries, muffled by his hand, seemed to come from an immense, a ridiculous distance.

"Ah, yes!" He'd evidently got his connection. "Kindly inform Mr. Curtis that Mrs. Tompkins is engaged tomorrow evening. Thank you—"

Even after he had hung up, he didn't let her go. He took his hand away from her mouth; the arm about her neck tightened and he pressed her face against his own.

"Little mistaken fool! What do *you* take me for?" he mumbled while he kissed her. "You haven't a show, I tell you. Nobody, nothing but me till your dying day, remember. You'll learn before long that I'm quite enough, God knows!"

IV

"I DIDN'T expect to find you in, really. I don't think I should have dared to come, Gregory, if I'd suspected you were here," Suzanne confessed with a radiant smile. "Just throw my wraps over that chair, please. I shall need them directly. I'm going in a moment. No, thanks, not that comfortable seat! Give me something with a straight back, something that will stick into me and drive me home early." She measured the furniture with a critical eye. "Ah—the piano-bench! That's what I'm after." She sat down gingerly on the edge of it and laughed at his stupefaction.

"What under the sun's the trouble?" Curtis gasped. "Don't tell me you're afraid of me, Suzanne. Has Tompkins been implying things about my reputation?"

"Good heavens, no! He wouldn't know how to imply things. He blurts out the truth in the most disconcerting way."

"He calls a spade a spade, eh, and I'm one of the dirty fellows?" Curtis grinned affably.

"We quarrelled last night—about *you*," Suzanne remarked. "My husband thinks that, for a woman, marriage wipes out the past—particularly the male portion of it. You were a test case, the first of many, I hope. Didn't his telephone message rather surprise you?"

"Indeed it did," he acknowledged. "I stayed in to-night because I hoped for just this. It *was* a wonderful chance for self-assertion."

"The humiliating part of it is that I'm scared to death," she returned. "I'll smoke one cigarette with you—and then I'm off. Do you know, Gregory, I may not have the courage to tell him I disobeyed."

"Ah, that would be low, Suzanne. If you don't, I will."

"No, no!" she cried. "He'd give you a black eye in some public place. I shall tell him myself; but I shan't have any great joy in the telling. See what marriage does for one!"

They lit up.

"Now, no more about Ned or I shan't have the courage to finish my smoke," she warned him.

She swung round on the bench and fingered the music open on the piano.

"Ah—you've bought some new things," she said. "'Coq d'Or, piano partition pour quatre mains.' 'L'Oiseau de Feu, piano partition pour quatre mains.' 'Sadko, piano partition—pour quatre mains,'" she read half aloud.

They were silent for a moment.

"Yes—*all* for four hands," he told her. "Rather dreary, isn't it?"

"Do you play them with Virginia?" she asked.

She felt repentant directly she had said it.

"My God, no!" he protested. "Virginia's fingers aren't even all thumbs. They're all toes."

He sat down casually beside her.

"You're facing the music at this moment, Suzanne," he reminded her. "Forgive the bad joke and let's begin." His foot was already on the pedal.

She threw her cigarette into the fireplace.

"Very well!" she said. It would have been downright cruelty to refuse his plea.

It was past midnight when Tompkins appeared in the doorway. He had come to call for his wife, he had informed the man, and had been ushered in without question. Suzanne and Curtis had been so much engrossed in the magnificent, crashing hurly-burly of the last few pages of "Schéhérazade" that they had heard nothing. Tompkins let them finish.

"Now I must be going. Good heavens, what will my husband say?" wailed Suzanne. She sprang up, found herself face to face with him and burst into a peal of nervous laughter.

"How dreadful!" she exclaimed. "And I distinctly told you it was to be an evening of *chess*. Forgive me, Ned; I had no idea—really—"

Tompkins had decidedly the advantage. Suzanne was quite unable to conceal her terror; Curtis was at a loss, very much bewildered and perceptibly embarrassed. There was a painful silence while Tompkins helped Suzanne with her wraps.

Then,

"Curtis," he announced, "if I ever find you again with my wife, I'll knock your damned head off. I'm not the sort to share her with anybody, you understand."

Curtis brought his lips together and said nothing. He repressed his anger admirably. Suzanne knew as she looked at him that her husband, by his insult, had killed the other man's interest in her. She was for him on the instant merely a partner in a sordid alliance.

"I apologize for my husband, Gregory," she said firmly. "Of course, I can't hope to have our friendship go on after this. You've been humiliated—because of me. I am sorry."

That was all. Neither Suzanne nor Tompkins said a word on the way home. Arrived at the hotel, Suzanne swept haughtily and with rapid steps across the drawing-room; Tompkins followed her in dogged determination. He opened her dressing-room door for her and, when she had entered, he stepped across the threshold.

"I thought you might be tempted to lock me out," he vouchsafed carelessly.

"So I'm to have no privacy at all while I'm your wife?" she asked with bitterness.

"Certainly not! Such a romantic, schoolgirl notion! It doesn't go in marriage; it's preposterous, Suzanne."

By a flood of angry tears, she confessed to her utter helplessness before him.

V

"How perfectly disgraceful! How horrid!" Suzanne bit her lip in an attempt to appear dignified and disapproving. Tompkins watched her. Her effort failed; her mouth widened to a smile and escaped from the imprisoning teeth. Then she surrendered perforce and burst into a merry laugh. "Really, women are dreadful creatures; they're *much* worse than men."

Tompkins guffawed delightedly at the success of his ribald anecdote.

"It's God's truth, too," he announced with pride. "Her chauffeur told Emile—"

As usual, Tompkins was drinking his morning coffee in Suzanne's bedroom. He always appeared, cup and saucer in hand, for an informal chat before he settled down to the business of bathing and shaving. He sat now on the edge of her bed and stroked his shaggy chin reflectively. He wasn't yet quite awake; his frequent, prodigious yawns bore witness to that. Suzanne, propped up by pillows, munched toast with evident relish.

"We're a shameless pair," she said at length. "Whatever became of our manners, I wonder? You look like a perfect coal-heaver, Ned; and I probably have marmalade or butter on my chin. Oh, dear, why do I thrive so in these surroundings? A year ago, I couldn't have stood it. And now!" She shrugged. "I have the greatest appetite even for breakfast; and the *thought* of breakfast used to vex me."

Tompkins chuckled, dug his knuckles into his eyes sleepily and, stretching out his arms, accompanied the gesture with an audible yawn.

"Didn't I tell you how it would be?" he wanted to know then. "All you had to do was to forget the silly rot you'd been brought up on. You married with the idea that everything would be delicate and pretty and *so* refined, didn't you? Silly rot! You were sure there'd be a lot of politeness, that you and your husband would spend most of the time trying to lift marriage to an exalted plane, and avoiding each other's eyes when there'd been a relapse. Silly *rot!* Men are a vulgar lot, remember."

He grinned broadly at her and followed it up. "Well, so are women, though they've been taught to believe they're something aloof and beautiful. That's what makes people unhappy, Suzanne. They really *know* they're rather rum, but they can't bear to confess it—so they suffer and mope and feel damned discouraged. You were like that; it was my task to cure you. A husband and wife have got to be inseparable and to know each other; the minute they accept the fact that honesty and simplicity and coarseness are the real attributes of human beings, the only ones that count, for that matter,—why, then they're all right, Suzanne!"

She shook her head and smiled.

"I don't believe a word of all that," she told him. "The point is, you've simply reduced me to your level. You've *made* me a vulgar sort. I certainly don't consider it the great and noble service you seem to. For seven months, you've given me not a moment's rest; I've seen only you. Naturally, *you're* coarse; how could I avoid growing so myself?"

"Listen to me, Suzanne." He bent over her earnestly. "Aren't you happy?"

She laughed. "Yes, indeed—disgustingly so."

"Aren't you perfectly content?" he pursued.

"Of course I am," she protested.

"Well then, what's the row?" he asked. "Before you married me, you weren't so devilishly happy or content, now were you?"

"No—that's quite true. I used to 'suffer and mope and feel damned discouraged,' as you put it."

He was jubilant. "There—you *see!* I've taught you to be yourself and to give up trying the other stunt. People had better wait till they get to heaven before they give up being human."

Suzanne meditated for a moment.

"But the trouble is," she objected, "we don't love each other. I live with you and accept you glibly enough. I certainly don't respect you, though. We've reduced marriage to the lowest possible plane. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves; instead, we're inclined to boast."

She paused, then faced him with decided abruptness. "Do *you* respect *me?*"

"Not a damned bit," he acknowledged in all frankness. "If I did, I should be miserable; it's a horrible grind attempting to live up to somebody."

"And you used to adore me." Her tone was accusing.

"But from the first I knew it wouldn't last after I'd married you." He was shamelessly honest.

"You do admit, then, that you don't love me?" She sighed.

"Oh, no!" His head-shake was energetic. "I call my feeling for you love; it *is* love. Don't you see how it is? I consider you part of myself; and a man always loves himself, no matter what he's like or what he does. Nothing else counts in this world. It's the same with you. You've learned to accept me in just the way you've accepted yourself for thirty-three years. We've grown *together*. It does sound intricate—but it's really so simple."

He deposited his cup and saucer on her tray and got up.

"Having a baby will be like everything else," Suzanne reflected. "Simple and straightforward and coarse—"

"As the devil." He finished the sentence for her.

They laughed.

"We're incorrigible," Suzanne remarked. "But at least we have one virtue—we aren't sentimental. We don't set each other upon a pedestal. We're planted in good moist earth side by side. That makes for equality. We don't aspire or burst into heavenly blossoms. We just burrow. We're happy and contented, because there's nobody to live up to, only somebody to live *with*. Don't think I'm complaining, Ned; I'm not. I get much more satisfaction out of being coarse than I ever got out of being refined. I'm stuck deep in the earth beside you; I love my degradation and I'm thriving on it."

THE ART OF THE MOVIES

By Arthur Carter

A SUB-TITLE from a recent thriller:
"Quick, Myra, here come the alligators!"

AT the farewell party that a popular bachelor gives to his boon companions on the eve of his marriage, all present are genuinely sorry. They realize that it is the last party he will attend, for a couple of months.

CAUSES: wine, woman, and song. Effects: Head-ache, heart-ache, ear-ache.

LIFE is a ride on a roller-coaster—a few bumps and it's over.

VIOLETS FOR SENTIMENT

By Neeta Marquis

I

WHILE the afternoon was yet young, Harriet Lemoyne let herself into her bungalow apartment in the pleasant consciousness that she was a favoured woman, able to leave in the hands of skilled subordinates the business built up by her own brain while she retired to perfumed privacy for the perusal of a love-letter from over the water—a letter from an undeclared lover, to be sure, but one who was none the less a husband in the making.

If she had been the kind of woman who sings to herself she would have hummed exultantly,

"There are smiles that have a tender meaning,
That the eyes of love alone may see."

As it was, the corners of her mouth lifted happily and her full dark eyes brightened as she removed her pretty street frock, smoothed it and put it away on a satin hanger scented with a sachet compounded for her exclusive use. Neither success nor happiness would ever make Harriet Lemoyne careless with the things for which she now paid a large fraction of her income. With sensuous satisfaction she slipped into a quilted robe of heliotrope silk likewise exhaling the fragrance and, gathering together several apparently unrelated articles from her dressing-table, settled herself to a luxurious hour before the grate in her blue-and-brown living-room.

The letter, with its Oriental stamp, had come in the morning mail, but she had reserved it for this time of unhurried solitude. Four months had now passed since she had written Allan of her mother's death. It was the new, surprising note of tenderness in his letters penned since he had received that word which had made her turn a freshly estimating eye upon her hitherto amply sufficient life.

Still fingering the sealed envelope with anticipatory enjoyment, she let her glance wander about the room, taking note of the imprint it already bore of Allan's personality. If his lot had been cast in an art school instead of a mercantile art establishment, he would doubtless be painting pictures by now instead of being merely an authority on porcelains. There were the two charming shore-marines he had helped her select, by the young painter for whom he prophesied big things; the restful wood-interior he had given her mother the Christmas before he went away; the unusual books he had added to the shelves by the fireplace, and his latest gift—the vase of pigeon's blood cloisonné that glowed like a flaming jewel against the brown and dull-blue of the wall panel. Refinement, distinction, individuality—that was Allan all over.

She took up his photograph, which she had placed on the tabourette beside her chair, to heighten the illusion of hearing him speak while she read his written words. Only twenty-seven and yet, with that characteristic grave directness in his dark gray eyes with their noticeable black lashes, he appeared thirty or more. Emergency representative of the great importing firm of Dale and Shippman, sent to the Orient in place of the regular man, who was ill—

and he had begun life as an orphan errand-boy!

Until recent weeks she had considered twenty-seven an utterly impossible age. It was what had established the easy brother-and-sister give-and-take of their earlier association. She winced now every time she thought of it in the light of a new relationship; and yet, it was nobody's business but their own.

Taking up the ivory hand mirror from the tabourette, she studied her image with deliberate and impersonal eyes. Anyone would declare she did not look her actual thirty-five by at least eight years. There was no gray in her thick black hair; there were no lines in her round face; her colour was a bit solid perhaps, but genuine, and there was plenty of it. She had once overheard herself described as a handsome woman with a hard finish; eyes brilliantly black, somewhat prominent, but with compensating lashes; mouth not beautiful, though her teeth were good—the expression too set for the softness of charm; but a woman cannot compel her steady advancement in business for fifteen years without having the record written somewhere.

Her mind went back over the four years in which Allan Stratton had shared with her and her mother this attractive apartment, with its sun porch and bougainvillea-hung pergola. The rent of it was such that at first she had been thriftily willing to sublet one room to so desirable a tenant as he. After that, his extreme courtesy to her mother had been all that was needed to put him on a footing of intimacy. How many holiday luncheons and dinners he had shared with them! How many pleasures he had planned, often for both, sometimes only for her; plays, symphony concerts—symphonies were a chore to her, though she never let him suspect the fact—and the frequent art exhibits which he never missed.

Even such of these things as were extraneous to her tastes had all helped to colour her personality. With the clear-sightedness that was one of her best business assets, she admitted that Allan had the more truly cultivated mind of the two, despite his haphazard education. Her own years at Vassar had served merely to confirm her along the more general cultural lines rather than to develop any inherent passion for beauty or learning. With an element of the sturdy commonplace in her make-up, she freely acknowledged to herself the material ends toward which she had worked ever since forced into bread-winning. Like a superior piece of stationary mechanism, she had steadily drawn to herself, by the dependable pulleys of a keen mind and inborn business sense, advantage after advantage until now, her body preserved in absolute health, she had income enough and leisure enough to justify the cultivation of the ornamental virtues.

Marriage with a man like Allan would form a fitting climax. Moreover, it would supply a balance for the loss of her mother. A single life was rather lonely, though she reflected that as a daughter she had little to regret. She had been lavish with the material comforts, and had given for the most part an amiable companionship. True, she had domineered at times. Her ruthless disposal of that walnut wardrobe and other fusty heirlooms rather disturbed her in solitary retrospect. But sentiment could be overdone. It would have been foolish to let a few ancient associations mar the harmony of their new furnishings.

But such reminiscence made for discomfort. She nimbly switched her thoughts back to Allan. Why should she not encourage this new feeling of tenderness, doubtless born of loneliness in the impermanent exotic life he was now living, and of the sorrow of their mutual bereavement in the loss of her mother? A little difference in years on the wrong side was preferable to disparity on any other vital point.

No one knew better than she the predominating selfishness of men. Allan was one in a thousand, tried out by the acid-test of association in the same apartment. With his nice, dear ways, he could help her make a home to which

she would be proud to invite such friends as it was best to retain. His income before he went away was less than her own, but he was of the stuff for advancement. Even if he were in the luxury-list, for that matter, she could afford him, and let the gossips say what they would! She need not give up her own business until it was decided whether he should retain his new status with the firm, anyway. A few hours a week at the office for her would still leave time for a fashionable club and the social diversions she glimpsed in perspective, provided by certain of her mother's old-time intimates.

She had been too busy heretofore to profit by her mother's connections, but now was the time—using the delicate business phrase—to cash in on them. . . . This letter doubtless bore word relating to Allan's anticipated return. . . . She would have him to dinner the first night, serving the simple home things he liked best—scalloped oysters—creamed potatoes—chocolate cake. She would wear her little orchid silk with the transparent sleeves—her arms did keep their roundness well.

Afterward, they would sit here by the fire. He would say that everything seemed so homelike and good after the alien conditions of Oriental life, but that he missed her mother. Then he would add slowly that of course, with her mother gone, he could not stay on in his old quarters, unless . . . unless . . .

He would move over beside her . . . would take her hand in that quiet, decisive way of his . . . and then it would all be settled, simply and suitably.

II

SOMEWHAT tremulously she opened the letter. It was written from Kobe.

A little surprised pang seized her at the first line—"not coming home yet. Have to go back into China to superintend a new pattern in bronze. The model made from my order is unsatisfactory—will have to stay there until results are obtained, and then come back here to finish up."

Then her eyes leaped to a significant sentence: "Because of this, I'm going to tell you what I had meant to keep back until my return . . ."

The steady red of her cheeks spread and flowed down the smooth curves of her throat, even to the white shoulders touched by the heliotrope silk. She had not anticipated the definite move before he came back.

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It was unthinkable — unthinkable. There must be some mistake. . . . But

her clear mind could not reject the import of a second reading.

Weakness overcame her for a few bewildering moments. But anger soon sent the blood pounding through her veins again—anger not toward Allan, but toward the one who had interfered as she was about to take possession of him.

"A little girl in the store."

Oh, how well she knew the type!—some little blonde chit in impossible French heels and silk hose sleazy enough to strain milk through!—the kind of girl that didn't know the difference between insolence and dignity—who thought a vicious display of temper could be adequately atoned for by an effortless apology!

How could Allan, of all men, be cozened by such a girl? Oh, she was pretty, no doubt! And distance worked astonishing things with the imagination of an idealistic and lonely man. . . . Pretty . . . and young.

Harriet suddenly felt all her thirty-five years, each one laid across her back like a penalty. Her other successes were futile if she had failed herself now. A bleakness came into her face. She deserved better than this.

But her spirit rose again combatively. A new spark kindled in her eyes. Allan, too, deserved better than to be made the victim of a chinaware salesgirl's romantic whim!

An idea in her executive mind was speedily welded into resolution. He had asked her to see the girl. She would do so—and rescue him from the threatening result of this mood born of isolation from his own kind. It was difficult to visualize the grave, courteous, reasonably sophisticated Allan Stratton as carried away by a flurry of sentiment; yet, a man left to his own homesick fancies in a distant land is not one to use the soberest judgment.

It devolved upon her, his closest woman-friend—almost his *family*—to pave the way for the breaking of the foolish pact. Finesse backed by inflexible determination had enabled her to put through many a deal more difficult. She would do it as painlessly as possible—but trust her to be thorough! When she had finished, no lingering sentimental hopes would engage this tawdry little counter coquette. Allan would come to his senses upon his return, when matters resumed normal proportions in his mind. He would then rejoice in his escape, and make the wiser choice.

A moment more and she was looking over her wardrobe with an eye to the most impressive of its contents. She would see the interloper while her feelings were fresh and clear. The girl would probably reach home soon after five-thirty.

She searched the telephone book for the apartment house named in Allan's letter. Yes, here it was, as she had imagined, in that cheap section in the north-west hills. . . . Hello . . . could they tell her when Miss Hazel Thorne would be in? . . . Was in now?—Oh, she had been ill! Was it safe for anyone to see her? No, no announcement necessary.

With coldly energetic fingers, she hooked, buttoned and wrapped herself into a crêpe afternóon frock and sable coat. When she adjusted her smart hat with the iridescent wing she was glad she had taken this trouble. The result both justified and fortified her. No millionaire's wife in the city was calculated more convincingly to overawe a flirty little "saleslady" in bargain crockery.

III

On the street she bought two bunches of violets to fasten in the rich furs at her breast. Certain sentimentalists, she knew, never wore violets unless they received them as a gift of love or friendship. She had once bought them only for her mother. But she was quite willing to take them for herself now in exchange for money. The distinctive touch of them on one's person was the main thing.

As she entered the apartment house, with its cheap veneer of modernity, she was glad that she was not only beautifully but warmly dressed, for the sun-

less halls were fifteen degrees more chill than the bright winter air outside. At the door of Miss Thorne's apartment she experienced just a flash of compunction over the unfair advantage she was taking of her adversary, which gave her face and manner a shade of softness she had not intended—at least, that was the only way she could account for the reception she received.

"Oh!" cried the girl who opened the door to her knock, extending slim, welcoming hands before Harriet could speak. "Oh, I just know you are Miss Lemoyne! How more than good and kind of you to come!"

She drew her eagerly into the room.

"Take this chair by the stove. I hope the gas doesn't smell too terrible to you, coming in from the outside, but I can't seem to keep warm in this little north apartment! . . . Won't you have this pillow behind you? . . . Nobody ought to live in a north room, even if it is California. It's the sun that makes life worth while. . . . Oh, I'd love to have you take off your hat and let me make you a cup of tea! . . . Do excuse this disorder. I've been huddled on the couch all day, too cold and too—sort of blue—to pick things up much. . . . But it's so good to have somebody to talk to—and you, of all people! I had a feeling you'd come, but didn't dare hope it would be so soon!"

With a little laugh that induced a spell of coughing she seated herself on the couch again, tucking one slender foot under her.

"Excuse me," she begged, "but it's the only way I can keep it warm!"

And this, reflected Harriet in her first bafflement, was the girl she had expected to walk over at sight! As easily walk over a playing fountain!

Speechless alike from lack of opportunity and from the shattering of her preconceptions, she allowed herself to be made at home, though she refused to surrender any of her war-feathers. A certain foreboding told her that her impressiveness was going to need all the bolstering that her clothes could give it.

Allan's girl!—this slim, boyish person in blue middy and scarlet tie, with her unmistakable air of breeding under her youthful effervescence. Instead of a flippant golden-haired china-store doll, she looked like a member of a freshman basket-ball team. Her colouring was clear and even—a little flushed just now. Her hair, brown touched with auburn, was drawn back straight from a forehead which, if less beautifully smooth and white, could not have stood the test of such exposure. It was rolled into neat little coils at the edge of her slim throat and fluffed out relievingly over two small ears which might have been carved from pink coral. Her eyes and mouth seemed made for tender laughter, though she had undoubtedly been crying there on the couch.

With such grace as she could command, Harriet responded to the hectic conversational openings presented to her, at no time able to regain the initiative she had lost at the start. At last she saw Hazel Thorne's eyelids lower until the fringe of them lay like two tiny dark fans on either side of a straight small nose, while a deeper flush crept over her cheeks; then she looked up again, straight into Harriet's prominent, direct, all-observant black eyes.

"And now," she said shyly, "let's talk about—him—shall we?"

The irony of it! What else had Harriet come for?

"When did you get your last letter?" she asked.

"This morning"—shortly—had that desolating stroke really been so recent?

"Oh," breathlessly, "mine came this morning, too!"

That was all that was needed.

"He has told me so much about you—that is, written, you know," the girlish voice bubbled. "I just can't get over it's being so awfully good of you to come to see me so soon! . . . No, I scarcely knew him before he went away. I was the newest girl in the store. I had always kept house for my father before, but his sickness took all we had, and so I went to work there. I've al-

ways been crazy about beautiful porcelains, and I've done a little china painting myself. I was dreadfully lonesome, and I guess Mr. Stratton felt sorry for me, though he hardly ever spoke to me. But I used to think sometimes that—he liked me a little—by the way he looked at me, or rather, didn't look, except in that sort of quick, yet slow, way with the eyes—you know what I mean. The other girls were all wild about him, and said so. But I never did. They're a good-hearted bunch, and have been so kind to me. But Mr. Stratton was never—you know—familiar with anybody, though he was always pleasant and friendly."

Never familiar—Harriet knew that well. It was one of the points which had counted strongly for him in her decision. . . . Decision? . . . A wave of chagrin swept over her, biting like acid into her smooth self-complacency.

But Hazel's voice rippled on:

"Then, when word went round that he was going away, I tell you, it struck us all. He just laughed, and got us together and said he wanted every one of us to write to him and keep him from getting lonesome. He looked at all of them but me, and they sang out that of course they'd write. But afterward he looked straight at me and I knew, somehow, that he wanted me to write more than anybody. When his first letter came it was addressed to Miss White, in the cut glass, who has been in the store the longest. He said he was going to check us off as we answered, and if anybody didn't answer, he would know she would just as soon he never came back.

"Well, I couldn't keep from writing after that. I just thanked him for always being so kind to me, and told him how sort of forlorn the chinaware seemed since he was gone. He wrote nice, jolly notes to all the girls—we hadn't known he could be so jolly—and one to me to read aloud to them. But he put in another that was just for me. He told me he had wanted to know me better, but had let the conventionalities keep him from saying anything before he left; but that now, looking at life in the light of the tough old civilization—the monotonous, nerve-wearing foreignness—in which he found himself—that's the way he said it—he wished he had been honest and told me some of the things he was longing—to say now!"

Her lips, sensitive and sweet as a child's, quivered. A peculiar pain contracted Harriet's heart—the first pang of suffering unmixed with selfish resentment that she had felt.

She thought of Allan's sensitive mouth, with its lips full enough for warmth and yet delicate enough to indicate truly the quality of his mind. In poignant fancy she saw them pressed upon the responsive lips of the girl before her, in the kiss of which he doubtless dreamed with maddening persistency, but for which he had been too fine to ask before he went away.

"Everything grew so sort of plain between us after that," the girl continued simply, in a confidence as far removed from indelicacy as cobweb is from twine. "It seemed as if we had always known each other. He told me how good you and your mother had been to him, and when he wrote me that your mother—had gone, it seemed almost like when I lost my father. He—loved you both. I wanted to know you, but" —she extended thin white fingers toward the anæmic gas flame—"I was afraid of you, too. He admired you so much, I didn't see how he ever came to —care for me. Or how you could have him with you day after day and not care for him the way—I do."

Harriet shivered slightly and shrugged her fur a little closer. If there had been a shade of duplicity in this girl she could have fought her on her own ground and grimly crushed her. As it was, she was helpless before the utter candour which did not remotely suspect the truth.

"I've begun to study along all the lines he's taken up," the girl continued again. "It sort of—brings him nearer, somehow. I'm going to night school four nights a week, and reading up on Oriental history and on porcelains out-

side. In my art work I'm specializing in design, because—has he given you just a hint of what may be ahead?—he *may* be made resident buyer for the firm. He's learning Chinese with that in view, to make himself as valuable as possible to the company. So I'm going to study it, too, with a returned missionary I know—to be as valuable as possible—to him. . . .

"Then, I hear a good deal, off and on, at the store. Our sales manager says that Allan's job, as he has already put it through, has meant a huge scoop for the firm. You see, no other importers have done yet what he is doing—having those Oriental bronzes and potteries made along lines of pure, plain, simple beauty instead of in all those old grotesque dragon-shapes and the like that they have followed for centuries. It seems that the native artists over there can't get the idea for these Western designs from drawings, and so Allan had the firm send him trunk-loads of glass and earthenware models in European and American shapes for them to look at and handle. The first lot of samples he sent back here, when put on in our New York salesroom, brought orders from the trade all over the country. Even allowing for the duty, the foreign goods can be sold for less than bronzes and glazes in the same shapes manufactured here at home.

"Allan's terribly keen about the artistic side of it all, and has the pattern-makers do things over and over before the results make him willing to order production in quantity. And that's why he's making good for the firm on the commercial end of the experiment. My idea is that if they should have him go there to stay, and we both understood the processes, I might help him by working out new designs. Anyhow, everything I can do, even to hurting my mouth over Chinese prepositions—only, of course, they don't have prepositions—seems so worth while—because of the future. Of course, I do get pretty tired. I guess that's why I got sick, being overtired from the holiday rush at the store—and living in this cold little north apartment; but it was the only one my chum and I could get near enough the school for my night work. She took such a cold she had to give up her position and go home. But I'm happy, just to feel I'm doing a little something—for him."

Again her tender eyes clouded and her mouth quivered.

Harriet gazed at her in a growing wonderment before which her bitterness had to give ground. *She* had not loved Allan like this. Love for her meant acquisition. For Hazel it meant service.

"When his letter this morning said he wasn't coming home soon it just seemed more than I could stand. I had been so buoyed up, expecting him. And I was so counting on stopping work at the store and just making a home for him, even if it had to be in—Kamchatka! . . . And so many times at night I think of how lonely he is, away over there among those queer-talking people, and of how lonely he was as a little orphan boy. . . . How I wish I could have—petted him!"

Her lovely eyebrows quirked at the inner corners, but she smiled the tears back.

"You can't guess how it helps to know you, now, and—to talk about him. Nobody knows we are engaged but my chum, and she never met him, for she worked in another place."

Her eyes grew brooding and mysterious. "It all seems so—wonderful to me!"

Again Harriet stirred in the warmth of her handsome furs. She had sat almost motionless since Hazel had begun to speak of Allan. Her intentions, ruthless, utterly self-centred, were withering like paper before the pure flame of this young girl's disinterested devotion. Again the steady tension of her ruling motive was suspended by a sense of futility, the stout ropes of her strong self-interest jarred from their pulleys.

And yet she struggled. Her business instinct impelled her toward some move calculated to save what she could from

the ruin. She suddenly knew that she cared for Allan—mostly—for his own sake; but her chief humiliation lay in the fact of her unfounded assumption of him as a lover. She had built a house on the sand, in the face of her vaunted knowledge of real-estate values. Moreover, that finer element which made her appreciate Allan's quality forced her to admit also the finer grain of this girl to whom his nature had gone out in high, instinctive yearning. Allan trusted her. Hazel trusted her. And she would have broken them both. Their continued confidence and affection would be sweet.

The loss of them—oh, she could not risk the loss! She must do something worthy of the woman they both believed her to be. Had she been hardening so fast with the years, the process hastened of late by the loss from her competent life of her dear, dependent mother?—hardening into an unlovely, spiritual form, even as those bronzes with which the habit-bound Oriental artists worked hardened into lines of unalterable ugliness? Then, perhaps this searing experience of disappointment—this withering of self-interest and burning up of vain self-complacency—was meant to melt her again, that her soul might be moulded in more beautiful contours. Somehow it must be so! . . . for already the loveliness of love had taken on a purer beauty to her inward eye.

Almost with surprise she found herself speaking unprepared-for words; yet, as the full meaning of what she said sank into her consciousness, she knew she would not wish to recall a single syllable.

"Hazel," she said evenly, "there is just one wise thing for us to do. You must leave these cold rooms. My apartment is too big for one, but too comfortable for me to give up. We must be company for each other till—he—comes back. You can keep house for me and go on with your school work, too. Would you"—her voice rang a little hesitantly—wistfully, even—in her own ears—"like to do that?"

Hazel's response was pitiful in its joyous amazement.

"Oh, Miss—Harriet! He told me how good! . . . It would be simply . . . And oh, when he comes back for me, a real home—to be married in!"

The shock of emotion broke a long-sealed chamber in the depths of Harriet Lemoyne's undemonstrative heart. Without knowing how it happened, she found herself returning Hazel's embrace and weeping.

She drew off quickly again, overwhelmed by a desire to be alone until she could readjust herself. She smoothed the abruptness of her farewell with arrangements to come the following day and help Hazel transfer her belongings. But after the door had closed between them she opened it again, hastily unpinned the purple violets at her breast and thrust them into the young girl's hands.

Violets were, after all, for sentiment.

IF there were more eligible men, women would probably hate one another a good deal less.

A GOOD BARGAIN

(A ONE-ACT PLAY)

By Lord Dunsany

SCENE: A Crypt of a Monastery. BROTHER GREGORIUS PEDRO *is seated on a stone bench reading. Behind him is a window. Enter* BROTHER LUCULLUS SEVERUS.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Brother, we may doubt no longer.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Well?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

It is certain. Certain.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

I too had thought so.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

It is clear now, clear as . . . It is certain.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Well, why not? After all, why not?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

You mean . . . ?

GREGORIUS PEDRO

'Tis but a miracle.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Yes, but . . .

GREGORIUS PEDRO

But you did not think to see one?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

No, no, not that; but Brother Antoninus . . .

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Well, why not he? He is holy as any, fasts as often as any, wears coarser clothing than most of us, and once scourged a woman because she looked at our youngest—scourged her right willingly.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Yes, Brother Antoninus!

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Yet, why not?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

We knew him somehow. One does not know the blessed saints of heaven.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

No, no indeed. I never thought to see such a thing on earth; and now, and now . . . you say it is certain?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Certain.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Ah, well. It seemed like it, it seemed like it for some days. At first I thought I had looked too long through our eastern window, I thought it was the sun that had dazzled my eyes, and then, then it was clearly something else.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

It is certain now.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Ah, well.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

(*Sitting beside him, sighs.*) I grudge him nothing.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

(*A little heavily.*) No, nor I.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

You are sad, brother.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

No, not sad.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Ah, but I see it.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Ah, well.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

What grieves you, brother?

GREGORIUS PEDRO

(*Sighs.*) We shall water the roses no more, he and I. We shall roll the lawns no more. We shall tend the young tulips together never again.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Oh, why not? Why not? There is not all that difference.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

There is.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

It is our cross, brother. We must bear it.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Ah, yes. Yes, yes. (*A bell rings noisily.*)

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

The gate bell, brother! Be of good cheer, it is the gate bell ringing.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Why should I be of good cheer because the gate bell rings?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Why, brother, the world is at the gate. We shall see someone. It is an event. Someone will come and speak of the great world. Oh, be of good cheer, be of good cheer, brother.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

I think that I am heavy at heart today.

(*Enter* JOHN SMOGGS.)

SMOGGS

'Ullo, Governor. Is either o' yer the chief monk?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

The Reverend Abbot is not here.

SMOGGS

Ain't, ain't 'e?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

But what do you seek, friend?

SMOGGS

Want to know what you blokes are getting up to.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

We do not understand your angry zeal.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Tell us, friend.

SMOGGS

One o' yer is playing games no end, and we won't 'ave it.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Games?

SMOGGS

Well, miracles if you like it better, and we won't 'ave it, nor any of your 'igh church games nor devices.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

What does he say, brother?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Friend, you perplex us. We hoped you would speak to us of the great world, its gauds, its wickedness, its—

SMOGGS

We won't 'ave it. We won't 'ave none of it, that's all.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Tell us, friend, tell us what you mean. Then we will do whatever you ask. And then you shall speak to us of the world.

SMOGGS

There 'e is, there 'e is. The blighter. There 'e is. 'E's coming. O Lord! . . .

(*He turns and runs. Exit.*)

GREGORIUS PEDRO

It's Antoninus!

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Why, yes, yes, of course!

GREGORIUS PEDRO

He must have seen him over the garden wall.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

We must hush it up.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Hush it up?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

There must be no scandal in the monastery.

(*Enter* BROTHER ANTONINUS *wearing a halo. He walks across and exits.*)

(GREGORIUS *is gazing with wide eyes.*)

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

There must be no scandal in the monastery.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

It has grown indeed!

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Yes, it has grown since yesterday.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

I noticed it dimly just three days ago. I noticed it dimly. But I did not— I could not guess . . . I never dreamed that it would come to this.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Yes, it has grown for three days.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

It was just a dim light over his head, but now . . . !

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

It flamed up last night.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

There is no mistaking it now.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

There must be *no scandal.*

GREGORIUS PEDRO

No scandal, brother?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Look how unusual it is. People will talk. You heard what that man said. They will all talk.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

(*Sadly.*) Ah, well.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

How could we face it?

GREGORIUS PEDRO

It is, yes, yes—it is unusual.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Nothing like it has happened for many centuries.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

(*Sadly.*) No, no. I suppose not. Poor Antoninus.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Why could he not have waited?

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Waited? What? Three—three hundred years?

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

Or even five or ten. He is long past sixty.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Yes, yes, it would have been better.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

You saw how ashamed he was.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Poor Antoninus. Yes, yes. Brother, I think if we had not been here he would have come and sat on this bench.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

I think he would. But he was ashamed to come, looking—looking like that.

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Brother, let us go. It is the hour at which he loves to come and sit here, and read in the little book of lesser devices. Let us go so that he may come here and be alone.

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

As you will, brother; we must help him when we can. (*They rise and go.*)

GREGORIUS PEDRO

Poor Antoninus!

LUCULLUS SEVERUS

(*Glancing.*) I think he will come back now.

(*Exeunt. The bare, sandalled foot of* ANTONINUS *appears as the last heel lifts in the other doorway. Enter* ANTONINUS *rather timidly. He goes to bench and sits. He sighs. He shakes his head to loosen the halo, but in vain. He sighs. Then he opens his book and reads in silence. Silence gives way to mumbles, mumbles to words.*)

ANTONINUS

. . . and finally beat down Satan under our feet. (*Enter* SATAN.) (*He has the horns and long hair and beard of a he-goat. His face and voice are such as could have been once in heaven.*)

ANTONINUS

(*Standing, lifting arm.*) In the name of . . .

SATAN

Banish me not.

ANTONINUS

In the name . . .

SATAN

Say nothing you may regret, until I have spoken.

ANTONINUS

In the . . .

SATAN

Hear me.

ANTONINUS

Well?

SATAN

There fell with me from heaven a rare, rare spirit, the light of whose limbs far outshone dawn and evening.

ANTONINUS

Well?

SATAN

We dwell in darkness.

ANTONINUS

What is that to me?

SATAN

For that rare spirit I would have the gaud you wear, that emblem, that bright ornament. In return I offer you—

ANTONINUS

Begone—

SATAN

I offer you—

ANTONINUS

Begone,

SATAN

I offer you—Youth.

ANTONINUS

I will not traffic with you in damnation.

SATAN

I do not ask your soul, *only that shining gaud.*

ANTONINUS

Such things are not for hell.

SATAN

I offer you Youth.

ANTONINUS

I do not need it. Life is a penance and ordained as a tribulation. I have come through by striving. Why should I care to strive again?

SATAN

(*Smiles.*) Why?

ANTONINUS

Why should I?

SATAN

(*Laughs, looking through window.*) It's spring, brother, is it not?

ANTONINUS

A time for meditation.

SATAN

(*Laughs.*) There are girls coming over the hills, brother. Through the green leaves and the May.

(ANTONINUS *draws his scourge from his robe.*)

ANTONINUS

Up! Let me scourge them from our holy place.

SATAN

Wait, brother, they are far off yet. But you would not scourge them, you would not scourge them, they are so . . . Ah! one has torn her dress!

ANTONINUS

Ah, let me scourge her!

SATAN

No, no, brother. See, I can see her ankle through the rent. You would not scourge her. Your great scourge would break that little ankle.

ANTONINUS

I will have my scourge ready, if she comes near our holy place.

SATAN

She is with her comrades. They are Maying. Seven girls. (ANTONINUS *grips his scourge.*) Her arms are full of May.

ANTONINUS

Speak not of such things. Speak not, I say. (SATAN *is leaning leisurely against the wall, smiling through the window.*)

SATAN

How the leaves are shining. Now she is seated on the grass. They have gathered small flowers, Antoninus, and put them in her hair, a row of primroses.

ANTONINUS

(*His eyes go for a moment on to far, far places; unintentionally.*) What colour?

SATAN

Black.

ANTONINUS

No, no, no! I did not mean her hair. No, no. I meant the flowers.

SATAN

Yellow, Antoninus.

ANTONINUS

(*Flurried.*) Ah, of course, yes, yes.

SATAN

Sixteen and seventeen and fifteen, and another of sixteen. All young girls. The age for you, Antoninus, if I make you twenty. Just the age for you.

ANTONINUS

You, you cannot.

SATAN

All things are possible unto me except salvation.

ANTONINUS

How?

SATAN

Give me your gaud. Then meet me at any hour between star-shining and cock-crow under the big cherry-tree, when the moon is waning.

ANTONINUS

Never.

SATAN

Ah, spring, spring. They are dancing. Such nimble ankles.

(ANTONINUS *raises his scourge.*)

SATAN

(*More gravely.*) Think, Antoninus, forty or fifty more springs.

ANTONINUS

Never, never, never.

SATAN

And no more striving next time. See, Antoninus, see them as they dance, there with the May behind them under the hill.

ANTONINUS

Never! I will not look.

SATAN

Ah, look at them, Antoninus. Their sweet figures. And the warm wind blowing in spring.

ANTONINUS

Never! My scourge is for such.

(SATAN *sighs. The girls laugh from the hill.* ANTONINUS *hears the laughter. A look of fear comes over him.*)

ANTONINUS

Which . . . (*a little peal of girlish laughter off*). Which cherry-tree did you speak of?

SATAN

This one over the window.

ANTONINUS

(*With an effort.*) It shall be held accursed. I will warn the brethren. It shall be cut down and hewn asunder and they shall burn it utterly.

SATAN

(*Rather sorrowfully.*) Ah, Antoninus.

ANTONINUS

You shall not tempt a monk of our blessed order.

SATAN

They are coming this way, Antoninus.

ANTONINUS

What! what!

SATAN

Have your scourge ready, Antoninus.

ANTONINUS

Perhaps, perhaps they have not merited extreme chastisement.

SATAN

They have made a garland of May, a long white garland dropped from their little hands. Ah, if you were young, Antoninus.

ANTONINUS

Tempt me not, Satan. I say, tempt me not!

(*The girls sing,* SATAN *smiles, the girls sing on.* ANTONINUS *tip-toes to seat back to window, and sits listening. The girls sing on. They pass the window and shake the branch of a cherry tree. The petals fall in sheets past the window. The girls sing on and* ANTONINUS *sits listening.*)

ANTONINUS

(*Hand to forehead.*) My head aches. I think it is that song . . . Perhaps, perhaps it is the halo. Too heavy, too heavy for *us.* (SATAN *walks gently up and removes it and walks away with the gold disc.* ANTONINUS *sits silent.*)

SATAN

When the moon is waning. (*Exits.*)

(*More petals fall past the window. The song rings on.* ANTONINUS *sits quite still, on his face a new ecstasy.*)

CURTAIN

IMMOLATION

By Paul Brooks

IT was at breakfast one morning that Reginald Prime first noticed the change in his wife.

She had had one of her discouraging headaches for the last three days and had shut herself up to fight the thing out alone. Prime had wandered about the house, aimless and homesick; he never knew what to do with himself when Lilla was ill. Every so often, he would poke his head into her bedroom in the forlorn hope of finding out that the latest powder or dose of bromide had taken effect miraculously.

The whole business bewildered him. He did pity poor Lilla as she lay in the chilly dark room and kept "wishing to God" he could help her; the feeling of impotence, of actual physical inability to cope with this sort of crisis, irked him. For his part, he didn't know what a head felt like when it ached; of course, it must be damnable torture and all that—but he couldn't help grinding his teeth sometimes and wondering whether a dash of healthy courage in Lilla mightn't be of more avail than the noxious brews she gulped down so frequently.

Prime was healthy and unimaginative; if only he could have put himself in her place, it would have been a tremendous comfort. Well, he couldn't. He therefore took refuge in the conviction that she gave in too easily; the minute a bright light set her temples throbbing or a bitter wet wind put her nerves on edge, she simply collapsed then and there. She hadn't it in her to keep up, to brave it out. She just let the aches and pains have their way; alone in the dark, she naturally became the inert prey of the neuralgia demons. That sort of thing might be all right when you were forty-five; but, damn it all, *his* wife wasn't thirty yet.

Prime, however, for all his theories, was full of a clumsy sympathy. More than that, a desperate, miserable penitence racked him; for he had the greatest difficulty, during Lilla's fit of agony, in keeping his temper under control. Had he acted, on these occasions, as he honestly wished to, he would have gone about slamming doors, rushing at poor Lilla with a volley of curses, grabbing her by the shoulder and shaking her. A black, ugly rage always obsessed him; he never had taken his fury out on his wife—never would, of course, do anything so abominable.

The furniture in the library, however, came in for many a hard kick. He would stand in front of a chair and swear aloud at himself, at disease, at Lilla; he would positively go out of his wits and attack the nearest object with a vengeance. Then he would of a sudden realize what he was doing. A weary disgust at his disgraceful tirades followed inevitably, with a coresponding exaltation of his worn, fagged Lilla.

He would be at her door, peering gloomily at her, many times an hour. "Is the head clearing, Lilla?" His tone was tender and solicitous.

Prime never knew that his wife, clever, discerning creature that she was, could catch the note, as of an injured baby, in his voice.

"Oh yes," she would return, "it's clearing—"

Prime, keyed to prophetic wisdom by his misery, was aware each time that she lied.

"I don't *believe* it's clearing, you poor thing."

He would strive so hard to be gentle and comforting; but his tone pretty generally contained a dash of brusqueness or petulance.

"Why do you say it's clearing when it isn't?"

Lilla could meet this. "Why do *you* persist in poking your nose in at my door and asking your silly questions?" A smile of frank amusement, an ironic tolerance gave her face a momentary brightness. "Go away, for goodness' sake. Call Diana up and ask her if she'll let you dine with her. You've eaten nothing to-day. That's simply absurd."

"I don't want to dine out. I have no appetite when you're ill, Lilla."

He stood there before her and tossed his head rebelliously. The effect was more than a little ludicrous—as if an enormous grizzly-bear had shown signs of sensitiveness by indulging in a pout and threatening to burst into tears.

"Oh, Reggie, you ridiculous man!" This with a faint groan and a discouraged grimace. "No wonder you're acting like a baby. You don't know what's wrong with you, and it's nothing in the world but an empty stomach, dear."

After a sally of this sort, Prime would withdraw in all dignity. Dine? Not if he knew it! Aware, however, thanks to the perspicacious Lilla, of the acute physical ache within him, of the actual throes of starvation, he would in short order see things with a new light.

Thirty minutes later his nose would once more be visible in Lilla's doorway. "You're sure there's nothing I can do? I think I *will* run over to Diana's. Be back by ten!"

"Yes, by ten!" Lilla would echo sweetly, not the faintest trace of mockery in her attitude. She knew, though, that it would be well past midnight before he showed up again. It wouldn't be Diana Belknap's fault; she would send him away early enough! The trouble was, once he got out of his own house when Lilla was ill, he hated to go back; so he'd take refuge in some club or other and drink and indulge in desultory small-talk until there was nobody left to jolly with.

II

THEY were always gay and foolish at breakfast, on the days when they celebrated the long-awaited clearing of poor Lilla's head. Prime's happiness knew no bounds; he devoured food voraciously, joked with his mouth full, roared out his lusty glee at the return of the prodigal to health and spirits.

Lilla, too, made a function of the meal; she would wear one of her loveliest tea-gowns and daub her face, in shameless good-humour, with paint. Prime had not a discerning eye and took his wife's blooming countenance in all good faith. Of course, on these occasions the unfortunate Lilla was still rather weak; but with her, physical lassitude had the queer effect of inducing hilarity. She made one ridiculous, bland jest after another and laughed immoderately and indiscriminately at her own pleasantries as well as her husband's. Her weakness lent to her laughter a helpless, infectious, almost delirious quality that simply captivated Prime. Breakfast with the convalescent was sure to be a festive period.

It was therefore a decided shock to Prime when he perceived in the midst of the wonderful celebration one morning an alarming change in Lilla.

Even the warm light of the dining-room—clear sunshine tempered and robbed of all crudity by the soft clouds of silk and lace in the windows—seemed like a cruel glare, a concentrated shaft focussed searchingly on her face. The rouge did no good. The circles under her eyes were as distinct as bruises; the net-work of tiny veins appeared swollen and slightly damp. The hollows in her cheeks and at the base of the throat were so striking that they resembled the shadows rubbed in unskilfully in a charcoal sketch.

And yet as she sat across the table from her husband and ridiculed him blithely, she possessed a beauty that was simply radiant. Haggard, worn, she looked at the end of her resources; but

for all that she sparkled and brimmed over with an indomitable gaiety. She held herself erect, her head tilted back, her long neck amazingly thin, the sweep of it by no means smooth—rather, broken by strange indentions. No imperfection of surface, however, could disfigure her nor mar the perfect loveliness and aristocracy that were hers. The inroads of disease would make no difference in her case; she would always retain the conquering spirit, the peculiar distinction that had set her apart from the beginning and had made her finer, rarer than other women.

Prime had never failed to recognize and crow about his wife's unique loveliness. She had headaches and a few other foolish ailments, of course; women did, he'd often remarked to himself philosophically. Once in a while, too, her poor heart got mutinous and palpitated. Unlike the majority of her sex, however, she was wiry, don't you know, wonderful when it came to picking up after a siege of illness. So he had felt both proud of her and sure of her.

The realization of her physical plight, the blinding discovery all at once that as she sat there she looked positively *marked* for death, made him turn sick and faint. If she had died before his eyes without warning, the effect on him couldn't have been more harrowing.

Lilla, while he examined her in uncanny horror, was intent on lighting a cigarette. He hadn't the bodily strength to come forward politely and help her.

She struck one match after another; her wonderful long bony hand shook uncontrollably and she failed three times to keep the flame going long enough to reach her mouth. Then the man behind her chair stepped forward to proffer his grave and successful aid.

Lilla, after she had sacrificed her third match, had grimaced in Reginald's direction.

"I never *heard* of such a silly fool!" she exclaimed savagely. "I hate nervous women. They're burdens to themselves and nuisances to their husbands."

Prime was silent.

Lilla leaned back in her chair and examined her reflection in the long mirror at the end of the room. She pursed her lips into a silent whistle of disapproval and ran a hand over her hair.

"I look forty—a suffering forty," she commented. "Thank God for my red hair, anyhow. Poor Reggie! It's a pity that you, of all men, should have a wilted, bedraggled wife."

"Bedraggled!" Prime had at last found voice. He sprang feebly to her defence.

"You're perfect, Lilla. Nobody can wear *clothes* like you."

He spoke truth; she was always gowned and coiffed in superb fashion. She never seemed buttoned into a frock or a morning wrap. Her costumes appeared as much a part of her as did her polished finger-nails. It was impossible to picture her pulling a garment over her head or being clasped into a thing by her maid. She and her gowns were indissoluble; she struck the observer as a sort of perennially blossoming shrub.

Lilla nodded. "No—I'm *not* bedraggled. You're right, Reggie dear. Wilted, though—I stick to *wilted*—"

"Wilted!" Prime tried another scornful exclamation, and failed this time to achieve the ring of conviction.

His wife laughed merrily.

"That wasn't a bit successful," she told him. "Let's agree right off on that point. *I* say I'm wilted; and you admit it unwillingly. It's sad; it glooms our nice party. But we can't dodge the issue any longer, Reggie."

Prime gave her his most adoring smile, then dropped into an abyss of melancholy.

"Lilla, upon my word I ought to be whipped," he burst out. "I simply haven't taken the trouble to study you; to-day for the *first* time I've seen you were ill."

She got to her feet abruptly. "But I'm not ill!" She was sharp. "I'm getting middle-aged, that's all."

She stood before him, erect and ironically smiling.

"Please don't scowl at me in that fear-

ful way," she begged. "Rosy cheeks and thundering eyebrows don't go together well. You're so miserable when you worry, you know you are. Thinking upsets you. Come, Reggie, be yourself or I shan't give you a moment to-day."

She put her hands on his shoulders and peered inquisitively into his eyes.

"Smile—or I'll box your ears!" she commanded.

He obeyed sheepishly, and, grasping his arm, she led him out of the room. In the library, she swayed suddenly and sank with a desperate sigh into a big chair. In her thrown-back head, her hanging arms and parted lips, there was weariness unutterable. Prime, as he looked down at her, shrugged, partly from wretched discouragement, partly from a bewildered annoyance.

Lilla, overwhelmed by a leaden weakness, made no attempt now at archness or gaiety. She moistened her lips two or three times. Her closed lids shut out everything but a whirling blackness. The skin on her forehead would contract, then become smooth again in a moment. And all the while, a pulse at the base of her throat throbbed visibly, swelling to the beat like a diminutive heart.

Prime groaned. Before the sound had become audible, however, his genuine sympathy had got mixed up with his blind, uncomprehending exasperation—and what had been meant for the gentlest token of solicitude ended as a perfect bellow.

The explosion aroused Lilla somewhat from her anguished daze. She opened her eyes. No human being ever understood another more thoroughly than Lilla in whatever concerned this clumsy man. In the midst of the turbulent chaos of her blood, she could still smile broadly at the absurdity of her husband's involuntary betrayal. She didn't for a moment blame him; she was quite aware that his furious impatience was directed, not at her, but at the demons playing havoc with her. She shared his emotion to the full; and she was tremendously amused.

"Yes, Reggie." Her breath was laboured. "It's palpitation. I *am* sorry."

The rest of the day proved a fiendish ordeal.

In the past, Lilla's heart had always swung back to its regular beat at the end of an hour or so. On this occasion, however, it whirred and fluttered madly till late in the afternoon. Whiskey, aromatic spirits of ammonia, even hypodermic injections had no visible effect.

Prime dogged the doctor's footsteps; he pleaded, remonstrated, and finally indulged in cynical jibes at the expense of the entire medical profession. Lilla was wonderful; she kept her bland good-nature through it all.

Prime's ministrations were anything but deft; if he had left things to the servants, a great deal of the confusion that reigned might have been eliminated. Once, he put a cup of hot water on the divan at the foot of Lilla's bed; the next moment, he had sat down heavily not an inch away. The impact of his burly body against the upholstery had given the cup such a jolt that it bounced high in air and deluged poor Reggie's trousers with its boiling contents.

It *was* uproariously funny. Lilla in her weakness laughed until she cried; Prime was so unstrung that he couldn't help chiming in every time he looked at her. Lilla's hysterical fit grew to alarming proportions; she suffered agonies in the grip of her uncontrollable mirth.

Prime was dismissed by the irate doctor. Shut in his own room, he shouted out his helpless, nerve-racking glee, stifled it at last and came creeping back. The moment he caught sight of Lilla he was off again with a stifled snort. Driven out once more, he could hear her anguished, strident, infectious merriment echoing through the house.

The most painful part of the whole business was that Lilla's heart didn't in the end thump back abruptly to its usual rhythm; before, it had always had somewhat the effect of a derailed engine that at last got back on the tracks and went its way again smoothly. This time, the process was gradual, maddening; it was

impossible to tell when the flutter ceased and the normal functioning resumed.

Prime waited in vain all day for the glorious moment when Lilla should snap her fingers and cry, "There! It's stopped!" "There! It's stopped!" meant that everything was all right, the danger passed. To-day, the heart action remained feeble, erratic; nobody knew just how matters stood. At six o'clock, however, it was agreed that Lilla was better; by midnight, it was decided that the palpitation must have ceased.

Even so, Prime worried and fretted throughout the night; it wasn't till Lilla greeted him with a mocking smile the next morning that he felt quite easy.

"Yes, indeed, I'm quite ship-shape," she assured him. "I'm *always* better than ever the next day, you know—"

"My God, wasn't it *awful?*" he asked, sitting down on the side of the bed and winding a strand of her gorgeous hair around one of his big fingers.

Lilla stroked his cheek indulgently.

"You were a dear boy, Reggie," she said. "I was horrid to laugh at you. But you are a blunderbuss!"

She shook her head at him and chuckled at the vivid recollection of the dethroned tea-cup.

Prime's answering roar was short-lived; he seemed uneasy and controlled his merriment with unusual promptitude.

Then he gave her a sheepish glance.

"Of course," he announced, with an attempt at adamantine determination, "we're going to chuck everything to-night. I'll telephone Diana; you couldn't *possibly* go anywhere for a day or two—"

His voice trailed off in an unconvincing mumble; in his eyes there was an expression of dumb yearning, of down-right guilty pleading.

Lilla knew—and Prime realized vaguely—that he should have cancelled their engagements for the night without consulting her. Despite his words, he *was* consulting her at that moment; moreover, he was with perfect guilelessness begging her to go through with things. When he exclaimed, "You couldn't *possibly* go anywhere!" he might just as well have said, "Couldn't you possibly go—*couldn't* you?"

Lilla got it; Lilla never failed to read Prime.

"Don't be silly, Reggie!" She came beautifully to his rescue. "I'm all right. I *want* to get out this evening. You're not to call Diana—do you hear?"

Prime assumed an air of bullying control now. He could afford to argue hotly at present. Lilla's attitude had quieted his fears. Of course, he didn't for a moment guess that his remonstrances had the taint of insincerity.

"Oh come, Lilla," he growled "You'll stay right in your bed for a couple of days. I never heard of such rot. Dining out after a spell like that!" He indulged in a scornful, artificial laugh.

Lilla shrugged. "I mean it, Reggie. I can't bear to think of being cooped up here for another day."

Prime squared his shoulders.

"I won't humour you, Lilla," he told her. "I'm planning to stay right here to-night." He flashed her a triumphant smile.

"Very well, Reggie—then I shall go alone to Diana's." Lilla grimaced archly in his direction.

Prime had known all along that she would play that card. Well—damn it all, didn't it defeat him, didn't it tie his hands? You couldn't budge Lilla, once she took a stand; you had to fall in, whether you approved or not.

"Oh, Lilla, you're the worst problem a man ever had!" he informed her bitterly now.

He kissed her in sorrowful gentleness and left her, his spirits already soaring at the prospect of the night's boisterous gaiety.

Left alone, Lilla sighed out her utter weariness. A few tears started to her eyes. She shook her head savagely.

"You're a miserable *fool*," she told herself in a furious mutter. The taunt helped her to keep the drops unshed.

III

THE Primes dined that night with the Orso-Belknaps; Diana Belknap was

caustic with Reggie for allowing Lilla to venture out when she was ill.

"Of course, it's your fault, Reggie," she told him brutally. "You *could* have kept Cousin Lilla at home. She does these insane things just to humour you in your selfishness—"

Prime sulked for a while after that; it wasn't till the plump, adoring girl on his right had cajoled him sweetly for a good five minutes that he regained his usual bland joviality.

They all went on to the opera afterwards. Lilla and Diana had fought the thing out in the drawing-room, after the men had been left to their cigars. The victory had been Lilla's.

"I'm going with you, Diana," she had insisted. "Don't try to reason with me—it wouldn't do any good. I've spent enough time in bed lately; you can't drive me back to-night—"

Prime loved the opera; it was a lark to visit between acts and confess shamefacedly that he'd dropped off to sleep at moments when the music waxed to an overpowering beauty. His routine jokes never failed to bring delighted laughs; he had long been accepted as a sort of professional buffoon, a pleasant entertainer during the entr'actes. People still chaffed him about the occasion, years before, when he'd nearly fallen off his seat in the midst of the "Waldweben." To-night he was in fine fettle; his progress from box to box could be traced without difficulty by his unrestrained guffaws.

Poor Lilla brought the merriment to an abrupt conclusion by fainting. Prime knew his wife would have preferred to be brought out of it quietly and unobtrusively on the cramped little divan at the back of the Belknap box; she always hated to cause a disturbance and inconvenience people. Prime remembered so well the night, soon after they were married, when she'd collapsed in just this way at a big dance; she'd been *such* a sport—merrier and more adorable than ever fifteen minutes after she'd come to. But there was no use arguing with the vixenish Diana; she insisted this was no ordinary, silly swoon. So they must needs troop in a body to the motor and listen to the nonsensical murmur of the crowd that collected at their heels.

Diana got in beside Prime; together they supported the limp form of the frail, conquered Lilla.

"We'll be there in five minutes; the doctor may arrive before us," Diana dropped coldly. Then her anger flared up. "Upon my word, Reggie, you're *brutal.* You've been driving her to death all these years—and it never occurred to you that you weren't a model husband."

Prime did not attempt a remonstrance; at that moment, a desperate, overwhelming grief swept him.

With his arms around Lilla, he had realized for the first time how emaciated she was; the transparent pallor of her face, as it hung heavily on his shoulder, aroused in him a swift terror. Diana had told him the truth; it was the conviction of his own guilt that made the torture almost unbearable. He had driven Lilla and she had come to the end of her resources.

The next morning, Lilla's illness showed itself as a thing appalling, triumphant. Nobody attempted to trump up comforting theories; the manifestation of the disease was too ghastly to admit of any subterfuge. Lilla suffered a severe hemorrhage; after that, Prime, the doctors and Lilla herself knew what they were contending with.

IV

THREE weeks later, Lilla had regained strength enough to enable them to move her; so they rushed her, in a private car, to a tuberculosis colony on the borders of Canada. She was still unfailingly cheerful; nobody suspected for a moment that she longed to die rather than face the ordeal of the freezing process.

Lilla had always dreaded the cold; even the New York winters, when she had been surrounded by the people she liked and had basked in the comfortable warmth of steam-heated houses, had

chilled her. And to-day! She was being hustled into solitary exile; she must suffer—and alone—the icy grip of the fearful climate. Her disease was to be given no quarter; it was to be handled brutally, to be blown on by knife-like winds until, numbed by the inhospitable methods of modern medicine, it relinquished its hold. That was all very well—admirable, in fact; but what under the sun would happen to her tender, shrinking body in the meanwhile?

Her weary protests, however, Lilla kept to herself. Reggie believed passionately in miraculous cures, in the tonic power of ice and snow and bitter winds. Lilla, bravely smiling, confessed that she had the same faith.

Prime, fortified by his theories about efficacy of cruel climates, felt much more cheerful in regard to the future after they'd got Lilla out of New York. Besides, she'd taken the indefatigable Miss Bronson with her. From the first, Prime had relied on Miss Bronson's judgment much more than on the combined efforts of the doctors. Here was a nurse whose whole life was her profession; Lilla's case absorbed her to the exclusion of everything else. Moreover, she loved her patient; and the best of it was that Lilla, who voted most women silly fools and hadn't much use for her sex, was really devoted to the handsome Miss Bronson.

It hadn't taken Prime three days to size up the situation and acknowledge his own and his wife's indebtedness to the admirable head-nurse. He and Miss Bronson had many a lengthy consultation; they'd talk, they'd argue for hours—and never once did they touch even remotely on any subject but Lilla's illness.

Established in the frozen north with her patient, Miss Bronson wrote Prime every day a complete report of just how things stood. It was an up-hill climb; sometimes there would be periods of several weeks during which Lilla made no progress. When she did improve, the change was marked only by a gain in flesh of an ounce or two here and there.

Prime would have despaired had it not been for Miss Bronson's assurances; her messages of comfort were particularly satisfying because of the fact that she didn't once keep the more alarming things back. She told the whole truth; and Prime knew, at the end of two months, that he had a right to feel encouraged by her verdict—"a slight but distinct and consistent improvement."

The winter went rather well on the whole. People were nicer to Prime than ever before; they did their best to make things pleasant for him. He rushed about everywhere, of course; Lilla had made him promise he would. He was really so busy that he didn't have time to worry or fret, except when he lay awake in his bed; only in those moments of self-communion did he experience grief with its constant accompaniment of remorse.

Then Lilla's plight, her lonely struggle far away in the gripping winds she hated, came to him with a terrible distinctness; he would shiver uncontrollably at the vision of her—bowed, emaciated, stricken, her wasted body numb and convulsed from cold, with ice in her veins and an aching chill at her very heart. Sobs would swell and struggle in his throat and force themselves out with the report of an explosion.

At such times, he would achieve a savage satisfaction in stripping himself naked, as it were, exposing with angry scorn his deplorable weaknesses, and focussing attention on his complete, overpowering selfishness. He could remember now all his fits of exasperation over Lilla's illnesses—petty ailments, silly complaints that she shouldn't have surrendered to, he'd always grumbled in the past. Well, he'd had the same moments of fury *since* the hemorrhage that had made all the difference. In these silent vigils of Prime's, the thought of Miss Bronson's ministrations brought no comfort; rather, it increased his self-contempt.

Twice each month, Prime visited his wife. The first glance at her always caused him a pang; it would take some

time to get reconciled to her bluish pallor and her unlovely wrappings. Lilla without rouge, with thick serge dresses and high collars, her hair drawn back and knotted simply, looked miserable and old; the Spartan life was not becoming to her, he had to admit sorrowfully. *His* Lilla, exquisitely gowned, elaborately made up, with her gorgeous hair piled high, had been such a brilliant creature! He wouldn't have believed that cold weather and simple clothes could cause such havoc. The stinging winds that brought to his cheeks a flush positively apoplectic and that gave Miss Bronson's complexion a beautiful rose tint, whipped all the blood out of poor Lilla's face, pinched it, made it wan and discoloured.

Still she hadn't lost—she never would lose her unique aristocratic distinction. She held her head high and dominated the scene; haggard, terrible in her emaciation, but unconquerable and of compelling charm—that was Lilla. Miss Bronson saw it as distinctly as did Prime; during the long tramps over the snow that the two took, they never ceased marvelling over Lilla.

Little by little, her strength returned; at last, in February, she was able by hanging on her husband's arm to walk short distances in the open. That particular trip of Prime's was a joyful one; when it came time for him to go, a wave of loneliness swept over him.

Lilla kissed him, sweetly casual, on the cheek; as Prime put his arms out, she drew back.

"I'm going to the station with you," she announced unexpectedly. "It's only a five minutes' walk—and your train won't leave for half an hour. You'll come for me, Miss Bronson, and haul me back?"

Their road was a straight one, with the absurd station in view from the first. The ground rose almost imperceptibly; it would never have occurred to Prime that they were walking uphill. For Lilla, however, it was as exhausting as mountain-climbing. Every few moments, she would tug on his arm and they would come to a stop while she fought for breath.

At length they reached a little grove of gaunt, twisted firs a few hundred feet from the railroad tracks; Lilla sank heavily on the stump of a tree. Prime stood behind her and she rested her head against his chest. They were silent for a time.

"So you think I'm going to get well!" Lilla's voice was weak, broken by short gasps. "I haven't a chance in the world, Reggie."

Prime bent over and laid his cheek against hers.

"Lilla, Lilla!" he pleaded. "You mustn't say such things; you've got to be brave and fight it out. Keep up your *courage*—that will save you."

Petulantly she drew her face away from his caress.

"Don't, for heaven's sake, talk nonsense," she exclaimed. "I know I shall die soon; I know it, because I see things so clearly all of a sudden."

She paused and sighed unevenly.

"At least," she corrected herself, "I face the facts now. I've really *seen* clearly enough from the beginning; but I've been such a fool, I've acted so madly all my life. I loved you, Reggie—I've been blind, insane ever since you first appeared. I *saw* clearly enough, remember—a weak, untrustworthy person you've always been and I wasn't ever hoodwinked; but I swore I'd *keep* you and now I've killed myself doing it."

She ceased abruptly and, raising her head, drew the cold air into her lungs with difficulty.

Prime, bewildered and heart-sick, pressed her to him.

"Don't talk like that, Lilla dear," he protested. "You don't know what you're saying. You're tiring yourself out—"

She struggled feebly to loosen his arms, then submitted.

"Didn't I tire myself out every day—every night—for years?" she asked him. "You didn't complain then; why should you now? That's so silly! But Reggie!" She spoke with an unex-

pected firmness for a moment. "I don't blame *you;* it's myself I've no patience with. For years I have known I was killing myself—but I went right on, because of my grotesque infatuation for you. Who would have suspected I was such an animal? It's been rather disgusting—beastly. You were stupid, you were brainless, you were a bore, Reggie; I was clever, I was too good for you. Well—you were handsome, and I was content to kill myself on that account. I've come to my senses now—just in the last few weeks — Reggie, you weren't *worth* keeping; you weren't worth the suffering I've been through for you. I suppose I'm cruel to tell you this; after all, it wasn't your fault. But I *had* to tell you. I couldn't die, I couldn't give you up to another woman without the satisfaction of showing you I didn't *care*, Reggie."

With one of her old-time vigorous gestures, she loosened his arms and stood before him with a mocking smile.

Prime, shaken and miserably confused, gave her a long look of stupid, uncomprehending agony. He felt stunned. He spoke, without knowing what he stammered out.

"For God's sake, Lilla—how can you? What right—? Something's wrong—you're not well, dear—"

Lilla still smiled.

"Don't be a goose and wait a year after I'm dead, Reggie," she advised him.

Suddenly the sound of a locomotive bell broke the stillness; in the echoing solitude, the clatter was startling, like a staccato hand-clapping or a fit of brazen laughter. Lilla swayed and groped blindly for support; on her face there was an expression of mute terror. Her eyes glittered as she fixed them on her husband and she shuddered helplessly. Prime caught her to him; her cold lips felt for his and clung with a wild passion.

For him, at that moment, tragic tenderness and pity and remorse blotted out everything else; for Lilla, it was a last perilous surrender, a final, acutely physical transport. It was almost in the nature of a gruesome immolation —the culminating, suicidal act of the infatuation she had claimed she was cured of.

She broke from him at last and, taking a few tottering steps backwards, rested against one of the trees. Catching sight of a figure that approached along the white road, Lilla drew herself up quickly and struck her hands together in a frenzy of impatience.

"Reggie—don't stand there so stupidly. Run!—you'll lose your train." She spoke with rapid vehemence. "Please — oh, *Reggie!*" A strident, angry note sounded in her voice as he still hesitated. "I'm all right, I tell you. Be quick—it's pulling out—"

She fixed him with a resolute glance, her head held imperiously high, an expression of furious command on her face. "I don't *want* you here any longer; I want you to go before *she* comes. She'll be officious; she'll call me 'darling'—all for your benefit! Oh, how I hate her professional chatter, how I hate you when you're with her!"

She tossed it at him defiantly; his blind stare showed him at a loss. She had meant it to be the accusation that would make transparently clear all she had said before. And she had failed—she saw it at once; he hadn't an idea of what she was driving at!

Prime, his head in a fevered whirl, blundered up to her, kissed her without consciousness of her swift recoil and started off at a mad race for his train. Lilla, crouched weakly against her protecting tree, was racked for an instant with sardonic mirth at the vision of the grief-laden husband rushing pell-mell for the railroad station! Soon, however, her laughter changed to a fit of hysterical sobbing.

For Prime, the succeeding hours were agonizing; he was haunted by the scene he had caught for a moment after he had scrambled on to the platform. The region had never looked more desolate; it was late afternoon and the sky was a wet leaden gray, heavy with a congregated mass of unshed snow. In all the

white world, with its chill, watery-blue shadows, there was no slightest stain of bright colour. The wind, as it crept stealthily in and out of the trees, had a ruminative, dreary moan, almost like the first notes of a keening song. The underbrush rustled and rasped faintly, —as if even the earth in this forbidding outpost suffered from a consumptive complaint! And Lilla stood in the midst of the oppressive gloom, her once vivid, gayly tinted figure black like her surroundings. She had turned round now and, with her face pressed against the tree, sobbed in a harsh anguish that rose at intervals to muted cries as inhuman and terrifying as an owl's hoot.

Of a sudden, the sounds, raucous, convulsive, full of a savage resentment, sank to a low, choked note and shivered out. Lilla, with her hands pressed to her mouth, suddenly faced about and confronted Miss Bronson, who had hurried up to her in a panic.

That was all Prime saw; the train rounded a curve at that moment and shut out the pitiful spectacle.

V

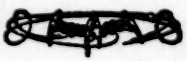
Prime, whose terror had grown on him every minute, got off at the first station. No train that night! He tramped and tore about till dawn broke. The early morning train got off only after a maddening delay; the snow was falling by now in blinding whirls and eddies.

It was past noon when Prime reached his wife's door. Miss Bronson met him. Drawing him down beside her on a bench in the entrance hall, she led up tenderly, beautifully to the dread fact that Lilla was dead.

Lying on her bed, her face yet twisted with her agony, Lilla was an ironic comment on Miss Bronson's hushed harangue. "She passed away—like a tired child. No suffering—ah, it was heavenly. She said only the one word 'husband'—"

Reggie had broken down utterly at that. His companion soothed him gently, with a complete self-effacement in her ministrations. For the first time in his life, Prime was being made acquainted with sentimentality in its highest estate. His grief was overwhelming, complete, terrible; but as he sat there shaken with sorrow, the first step towards the fulfilment of Lilla's prophecies was made. For Prime, an assuagement of his pain could come only through the balm of tender reminiscence, of sweetly comforting words—in short, through that exercise of sentimentality so alien to Lilla and so natural to Miss Bronson.

Miss Bronson had lied about Lilla's death, of course; and it was really quite right that she should have. As a matter of fact, Lilla had not spoken a word after Prime left her; when the nurse reached her side, a hemorrhage had already begun. She had suffered throughout the night and had died in a grim, implacable, resentful silence.



THE most lovely picture in the world is that of a young mother crooning her baby to sleep. Nevertheless, this is the same girl who, a short while back, lured the baby's father behind a palm, gazed at him dreamily, gave a sad sigh, and so convinced him that he was crazy with love for her.

THE BIG FROG

By Orrick Johns

DALE TREMONT is a legend. To the greater number of those who know the name, now that the man himself is no more, his memory stands for every human attribute that invites contumely. And even for me, who managed in a measure to follow the dark ways of his brain, it is practically impossible to present him in a sympathetic light. Tremont himself must have realized this. He must have known that the portrait of himself etched by the acid of his acts did not lend itself to any friendly attempt at amendment. For in his bed in that gray New York hospital, he said:

"Whatever you do, don't try to explain me. They'll only think it another pose, or that I've come back from the other world to laugh at them. No . . . there's no explaining me any more than you can tell why an old trainer will hamstring his own horse."

Nevertheless, I have set myself the job of telling, in so far as I know how, the real story of the strange fellow's end. I have two strong reasons for doing so.

First, his peculiar delusion is the sort that has a fascination for many in these days of weird philosophies and wild creeds. But the other reason is a better one; it is that I personally have known of a half a dozen acts of positively Quixotic generosity, performed by Tremont at different times in his ill-fated life, and without the faintest hope of reward or even acknowledgment. That sort of thing is rare. It is my excuse for writing his history.

It has been nearly a decade since that bulky form twisted upon the hospital bed and sank into the first real rest I believe it had had for years. Ever since then I have been intending to begin the story. It remained for young Holloway Holmes, the architect, a few nights ago, as we were driving down the Avenue, to point out for me the exquisite illuminated turret of the Bush Terminal Building through the cleft of Forty-second Street, and bring back in a flood the recollection of that mad night of Tremont's when he looked from just such a height into the eyes of a great city, and saw for the first time his own distorted image in its true light.

II

My earliest recollection of Tremont was the year he was thirty-six, a delightful age for such a man as he. Rich, witty, of assured social position, physically in perfect trim, good-looking, bouncing, well-groomed, and really in demand for himself and himself alone, at every affair. He was a little vain, I remember, especially of the attentions of women; but wherever he was to be found, in Paris, or at Hot Springs or the races, in New York or in Florida, Tremont was a sight to stimulate the pulses. He was always ready for play, always the amusing cynic-sentimentalist.

I say always amusing, but it often seemed to me that Tremont was least of all so at home. Of course at home he was tied down somewhat to his prosperous business, but I do not refer to that drawback. The fact is, there was a snappish, belligerent streak in his

nature, an arrogance which asserted itself there, and was hardly apparent elsewhere. Had Tremont at this time, in his golden age, broadened himself by migrating to Europe or the East, I like to think he might never have become submerged in the bitter warfare that darkened his charming promise.

At home, in the middle southern part of the country, he had no outlet for the intellectual hand-springs he delighted to practise. The men who inhabited his clubs were of a more sour confection. With very little to make them pleasing, except a smattering of sports, they were absorbed by the fluctuations of the market, or sat about for days unappetizingly smacking their lips over the latest financial failure in town or the newest social scandal. Beyond the range of home gossip their imaginations rarely ventured. And they hated Tremont as such men do gradually come to hate a humorous gadfly, even of their own sort. They squirmed under his half-comprehensible flings of wit, his dubious paradoxes, his careless disdain of their success—even of his own success, won, it is true, as easily as though he had done it with his left hand.

However, at this period, not Tremont's bitterest enemy would have predicted anything for him but an expanding and brilliant career. Some people whispered that all was not as fair as seeming, that he was heavily mortgaged, that he had managers who robbed him. But then they recollected his astuteness and foresight in past deals, and knew that he was no fool. It would take more than a crooked lieutenant or two to hurt his rating.

Others said that a man who loafed as much as he did could not be exactly on the square. What was this business of philandering in the country on horseback during the mornings, of being the only man present at afternoon teas? And that he drank too much was certain—it was ruining his figure.

If Tremont knew of all this talk it did not disturb him, though it may have flattered him. He went about his usual leisurely round of affairs, perhaps a trifle too self-conscious of his special rôle, the philosopher of little reading and no very profound feeling.

Then suddenly the whip descended.

I was away at the time, working on my lectures for the next year. I heard the news as one so often hears an ominous rumour about any prominent figure—from the lips of a woman. It was at a delightful retreat in Carolina.

Dale Tremont had been expelled from the Wilhampton Club. That was all. Surely I knew more about it—and wouldn't I tell her? She had only met Mr. Tremont once, and thought him such a charming man.

To understand what it meant would be to have in one's bones the atmosphere of the aristocratic, backward inland city of a certain size, to possess at one's fingers' ends knowledge of its intrigues, its family histories, its devious sources of authority. And understanding what it meant—what it meant to Dale Tremont especially—I simply gasped at the possibilities.

The thing seemed hardly believable. It certainly seemed impossible to survive, if true; yet, there it was, the stark fact, confirmed daily by other lips than those of my pretty informant. Expulsion from Wilhampton!

If Tremont had committed suicide, if he had gone to the penitentiary for some black crime, there would have been a soothing finality about his fate. But this expulsion, this indeterminate, vague, horrible sentence of social semi-consciousness was something so much more unrelieved, so much more damaging, really. Then there came to me the familiar, blithe thought, that it was Tremont. If anybody could wriggle out of the mess and right himself it would be he. All the force of tradition, of sentiment and of the women, would be on his side.

With this reflection I dropped the matter. By the time I got back to the city the Wilhampton affair would be adjusted, and Tremont would be pursuing his urbane way.

III

I HAD as a rule a great many things to do on my irregular visits home in those days, and I heard little about Dale Tremont until I began to breathe freely and get around. Then one afternoon I dropped in on Mathilde Bennett.

She was the nearest thing to a live wire in sight, and I enjoyed hearing her mix up her Anatole France and her Shaw, her Wells and her Hardy as she always did quite deliberately. Her spacious reading table was usually covered with the latest offspring of these literary fountains, sent in bunches from a New York book store. She painted, too, and should not have lacked some inspiration in the fine Rembrandt, the suave Hoppner, and the pair of Monets, not to mention lesser glories, which, each with its individual little cylinder shade above it, combined to shed a warm glow—upon her comfortable drawing-room. We presently got into the vein of scandal.

"Personally," said Mathilde, "I always liked Dale well enough, but I wasn't one of the ravers. Of course, I am a perfectly respectable mother of three children with a husband who reads the Second Inaugural before going to bed and weeps over it. You know Morty actually does. And Dale really made me nervous. But Althea Gray was indignant about the affair. Maybe they didn't have good reason to expel him—it certainly seems a serious thing to do to anybody, as she says—but Dale made outrageous remarks about people. The mere fact that he said them to get a laugh doesn't help the people he said them about. However, nobody knows a *thing* except the Board of Directors; and that puts it in the very worst light, of course. You know you can think anything."

"Do you mean to say they have not preferred charges openly?"

"That's what he raised such a row over. Simply acted like a madman. Demanded an exposé. Challenged everybody to a duel. Got all sorts of things published about himself in the newspapers. You should have seen them—it was perfectly absurd."

"Laughing in his sleeve?" I faintly suggested; for even with the prestige and glory of the Wilhampton at stake, it did sound impossible for Tremont to play the hysterical.

"Not laughing at all! Really on the rampage. And the next thing he did was to get out of business, leave his famous apartment, and open that old house of his grandfather's on North Street. You know where it is; awful neighbourhood, a thousand years old and gone to seed. He's moved everything there and told the newspapers he was through with our ill-bred civilization, and was going to rehabilitate the old era of simple manners, noble manhood, and honest aristocracy, and all that sort of thing. Some Tremont or other has always taken himself seriously. It was his uncle when I was a girl."

I remembered the old Tremont house—a curious stone relic of square towers, rusty iron-work balconies, and broad verandahs, set in the midst of a small plot of sparse grass badly discouraged by a quarter of a century's fight against the annual tons of coal dust which settled upon it.

The building was alone of its kind in the midst of a double row of cheap and ugly lodging houses, with their upper stories and basements let out to small factories, laundries, barber-shops, and the like. It must have been a task refurbishing it for decent occupation, and yet I imagined an interior of tall mirrors and old wood and high ceilings which might not be unattractive. At any rate this last move of the declassé Dale stirred me so that I forgot his exhibitions of poor sportsmanship as Mathilde related them to me.

"I suppose, then, I could find him there?" I asked.

"Oh, of course, *you* would look him up."

"Of course," I laughed. "I was born in this town quite a few years ago, and Dale Tremont's *débâcle* is the only romantic thing that has happened to it

since. Honestly, Mathilde, how do you manage to stick it out? I heard the other day that the old River Hotel is giving up the ghost. No patronage. Nobody out after six o'clock. Think of it—the River, with all its history, one of the show places of the continent even in my day. It's a shame. You drive away everything that is likely to keep you from your peaceful community sleep. And poor Dale Tremont, just because he is amusing, goes down before your virtuous wrath."

"You're perfectly right," she replied, as she gave me her hand. "Don't know I'm alive half of the time. That's why you've got to see that I have a jazz of a time when Althea and I come on to New York in October."

I went to the Tremont house on North Street. It was locked and barred. The next day I heard more of the details of Tremont's offence, and I could understand why he had found it more comfortable to go to the Azores or Brazil, or some such place to get over the biggest surprise in his life.

His offence had been decidedly worse than being amusing. He had actually brought as his guest to a Wilhampton dinner-dance, a woman whose name had been a by-word in the town for nearly a generation. It was the most preposterous piece of braggadocio I have ever heard of, and the general feeling was that he deserved what he got. I hoped he would never come back, but I felt too sure that he would. It was evident from his first outburst after the expulsion that Dale had all of the stubbornness for which his family had been noted, and added to that, I knew, enough vanity not to wish to be forgotten by his enemies.

My fear that he would return was quickly confirmed. A month later I ran into him in New York, in the bar of the Knickerbocker. He was just off the boat from Havana and was talking vociferously with a chap I dimly remembered in my college days. We were left alone for a few minutes—I was already late for a theatre party—and I was glad literally not to have the time to open up the subject of the Wilhampton. It is a melancholy job condoling with the victim of one of those acts of social justice from which there is no court of appeal.

But Tremont's whole story was insistently apparent in his looks. His defiance, his lack of ease, his tendency to raise his voice and to make all his statements a good deal more forcible than was necessary revealed the depths of his wound.

"Not going back?" I asked.

The remark was perilously close to the subject I wished to avoid, but Tremont did not take my cue.

"Sure, I'm going back," he replied with spirit. "I'm going to open that old house and *live*, by George! Out of business, out of everything—I've longed for this for years. Come on when you can, and we'll have some parties that will be worth remembering—like old times."

I decided mentally that I wouldn't. Indeed, I rushed off to the theatre carrying away, on the whole, an evil impression of him. He looked fat and soft, and red as beef. No doubt South America had been one long spree. He looked a little funny in fact. It was a pity. Could a chap as promising as Tremont had been, be finished? Yes, I felt sorry for him. The kind of fibre to turn the thing into an asset was lacking, it seemed.

"Damn it," I thought. "I wonder if he is really innocent? I wonder if those imbeciles have done him up just for meanness. He doesn't talk like a man who is ashamed of himself. But there's a look in his eyes . . ."

There had been a hungry, fighting look in his eyes; it had made me a little sorry for my indifferent attitude. . . .

"Oh, deuce take him!" I finished.

And the sight of a jolly box-party and a rising curtain (is there any more gorgeous moment in life?) soon drove out of my mind the Tremonts and all other matters that were not at least as inconsequential as the girl's silk cloak

thrown over the back of the chair in front of me.

"Milord," said the usual Butler . . . and so forth. I settled down to enjoy myself.

"Why in the devil will people be serious?" I thought.

IV

My ties at home had grown more and more tenuous, and my trips less frequent. I heard of Tremont from time to time, and the news that I received of him was such as to make me renew my wish to keep out of his way. Apparently the streak of peculiarity I had noticed in him on our brief New York meeting had widened and deepened into something quite out of bounds.

My information was scanty but sufficiently indicative. He had set himself up in his old house as a modern Diogenes, and had cultivated associations with all sorts of shady people, radical thinkers, ladies no better than they should be and a handful of cantankerous youngsters who were not learning anything from him that would do them any good. In fact the most dire stories were being circulated about the happenings in North Street, the large majority of which I hope I had the common sense to discount.

Certainly the town itself was beginning to be decidedly nervous about its descended god. People fear a man who has had and lost the things they most honour. Having nothing to gain, such a man may forgo ordinary behaviour, and experiment on the shady side of ethics, especially if, as was the case with Dale, he has plenty of money.

There will be those who will say that Dale Tremont did have something to gain; namely, the salvation of his own manhood, which it was not too late for him to hope to recover. But the dreadful fact about him was that salvation of any kind seemed to be the last of his cares.

I was not then acquainted with the special delusion under which Tremont was suffering, nor with the intense and burning possession it had taken of him. I received two or three short letters from him at intervals of many months, which, had I been curious enough to examine them, contained queer phrases that would have opened my eyes. Only now, after what has happened, do these phrases become sinister and significant.

At that time, I dismissed the letters at once, with a feeling of disgust, and the passing expression of wonderment as to why he should have written them at all. I have since learned that throughout this period he wrote similar letters, threatening and unpleasant, to scores of people, some of whom he had barely met.

Then suddenly his deviltry took a new turn which made Dale Tremont's very existence as evil as the plague to everybody who knew him. He bought a printing press. There were no half-way measures about anything Dale did. Evidently he anticipated some difficulty getting his printing done in a community almost solidly ranged against him. At any rate, the large basement of the North Street house served as his shop; his means allowed him to engage the help of a typographer, and he began to distribute as unique a broadsheet as ever issued from a type form. I was indebted to his unsought courtesy for the first number.

We are brought up in the world of everyday to observe somewhat straightened rules of conduct. We strive to keep most of our real opinions to ourselves, and to act, at least in the presence of others, with dignity and reserve. Especially are certain matters understood, without the necessity of rules, to be inappropriate for general discussion. That is to say, there is a talk that is unclothed just as people can be unclothed; but the words we use are always more or less becomingly garbed.

Dale Tremont's paper seemed not to have been born into such a world. It seemed to have appeared suddenly in the market-place in broad daylight like an unashamed Lady Godiva. It was less suitable for general circulation than

a jungle tiger is suitable as a nursery pet.

In plain terms it was, beyond all description, awful.

I give you my word, so accustomed had I become to the manners of civilized men, that I scarcely dared read further than a half a dozen paragraphs of the crudely printed sheet. I could see at a glance what the thing was—and the possibility of what it might become sent the cold chills through my marrow.

Worst of all, it was clear that if this new monster of Tremont's were not early strangled it would have a sort of vogue; it would be able, that is to say, to wield a certain kind of power, and to seek, and obtain, a certain degree of protection. Two things Dale Tremont was, in his most reckless flights—he was clever and he was cautious.

My heart went back to home. What in the very devil were they going to do about it? Probably a stray bullet, or an unaccountable fire in the old Tremont house would end it.

In the midst of these gloomy reflections, I ran across a paragraph which reminded me of the gay humour of Tremont's conversation in the old days. I did not like his joke; it was personal, and the inference was clear that it was a joke at the expense of a woman. But some twist of phraseology got a laugh out of me and I felt less like a conspirator in a plot against the peace of the world. Only one thing could happen. The sheet would go on being printed for a time, it would wear out its novelty, and then it would become a laughing stock—be put down as the ravings of a funny man.

The next instant, toward the bottom of the page my eye lit upon two lines which made my blood curdle. I shan't quote what it said. It was a reference to myself. I flung the paper into my log fire. The stray bullet hypothesis came into my mind again and I welcomed it with glee.

For more than a year the thing arrived at my table at irregular intervals. I tried hard not to read it, but inevitably I ended by casting my eye with furtive casualness over its columns. I could picture hundreds of others like myself going through the same struggle, and succumbing at last to the same temptation. I realized that it was upon that sort of curiosity the thing would live.

V

In the paragraph which ends the last chapter I have given away my most carefully guarded secret—I have confessed a weakness that has all but led me to ruin a dozen times. And the weakness I speak of is perhaps the most humiliating of all. It is curiosity. It was curiosity which made me an antiquarian, a student of ancient trinkets and evidences, a scandalmonger of prehistoric ages.

It was curiosity that gradually overcame my aversion to further dealings with Dale Tremont. There was a sinister glow of fascination for me in his history, his whole progress from bad to worse, but especially his uncanny gift for surviving the most abominable inventions his brain could conceive.

I began to romance about him. I drew analogies between him and all the unscrupulous characters of history and legend I had ever read about. Here was a modern Caligula or César Borgia, who stopped only short of actual assassination. To me the man was a scientific rarity, born out of his time—an effect for which there must be a cause. And I became a prey to the desire to learn the cause.

I have already spoken of the intense sincerity which possessed him, and it is a fact that this earnestness, this obsession with some perverse idealism, crept out in his writings. He began to reflect a wide field of desultory reading. I felt sure most of this reading had been done since the scandal of the Wilhampton. I remembered him before that time as bracing and witty, but illiterate. Now, it was becoming a common thing for him to flirt with the names of Voltaire and Confucius, of Disraeli, and Dean Swift, of Roche-

foucauld and Kant and a dozen others of the like in his paragraphs. Again he gave himself up to military ideas, and it was Alexander or Marlborough, or Stonewall Jackson, who furnished him his text.

But more than all else the thing that stimulated my inquiring soul was the fact, gleaned from all sorts of hints and suggestions, that somewhere in Tremont's scheme of madness a woman had suddenly been introduced.

To cut my confession short, I found myself not long afterward in North Street, ringing the doorbell of the old house. I had telephoned that I was coming. It was night, and it struck me that the house was weirdly lit up from top to bottom, as if for an extraordinary reception.

The door drew back revealing an elderly negro in evening dress, who saluted me almost soldier-fashion.

"Mistuh Tremont, suh, yes, suh. Dis way, suh."

I followed him through a small, square vestibule into a hall, where he accepted my hat and stick and nodded me to another door. The room I entered was vast, evidently a pair of the old salons knocked together. The hand of some capable person had kept it rigidly in the antique motif that suited best its high arched doors and casements, heavily moulded, and its distant ceilings. The rather dimly diffused light came entirely from a half-dozen sconces upon the walls—with the exception of the corner nearest to the door through which I entered. This was fitted up in the manner of an office, with a drop lamp, in the circular glow of which I became aware of a blonde, curly mass of hair bent over a desk. The figure was that of a young woman, busily writing.

She did not look up, and my glance travelled to the light of a hearth fire beneath a great marble mantel at the other end of the room.

From one of the chairs beside the fire rose a solid, mandarin-like figure wrapped in a flowered silk dressing-gown. It was Tremont, and I derived an overwhelming impression of dissolute power from his appearance. The bare throat and heavy jaws were rolling in flesh; two beady, bold eyes twinkled somewhere in the ruddy circle of his face, a soft, fat hand was thrust out to me and drawn away the instant I had touched it, and as he kicked aside a small rug that was in his path I noticed that his feet were encased in sandals.

He motioned me to a seat and snapped his fingers. The figure of the girl at the other end of the room half rose from its chair, and instantly afterward a trio of negroes appeared in the two great doorways. The old negro who had shown me in advanced into the room and made his curious salute.

"Yes, suh, yes, suh," he mumbled and disappeared.

Tremont dropped into his big chair and leaned toward me suddenly, chuckling. The man's neck seemed to have grown a foot thick, the arteries and folds in it threatening to submerge his head.

"It doesn't matter why people come here," he rasped, in answer to my conventional explanation of my visit. "They all have to come sooner or later. All I'm asking of the world anyway is what that New England mate told his skipper he was going to get or quit. 'Ceevility, sir, plain ceevility, and damned little of that.' I'm getting it, Walton, I'm getting it. What do you think of my camp?"

"Well," I replied, "it's an improvement on the gilded little paradise you used to live in."

"Yes, in those days I drove automobiles, the best they made. I was the first man here to have a French car. Now I drive horses in an open carriage thirty years old. That's progress, according to my notion. Going from speed to leisure is progress."

The man's whole attitude was a little too encroaching, his eyes especially so. As my glance wandered around the room to avoid his, it persistently stopped on the curly head under the lamp. I tried to conceal my impolite

interest in her, but Tremont interpreted my uneasiness.

"My secretary," he said, and called: "Join us, Harmony."

Then he turned to me fairly bursting with exaggerated pleasure over his joke. "Harmony! Isn't that a name for a secretary? Harmony, Walton. There's nothing like having things—and people—fit in!"

The slim, fair-haired girl sat down quietly near us, and began to absorb Tremont with her look. I mean that exactly. Her frank worship of the man, her thrilled silence as she heard him speak, were so obvious that they reduced me to a greater helplessness than I had already experienced face to face with this rugged reception. A moment later the negro arrived with a tray filled with cooling liquids, and I was permitted to rise and stroll about the room. I hoped the conversation might take a less headlong turn toward the monologue.

"I call him the Field-Marshal," said Tremont, nodding toward the departing servant, "because he meets all comers and vanquishes them. You wouldn't believe that old head capable of the subtlety it contains. But you'll have to get used to the perfect adjustment of forces I have built up here. Do you know how the Field-Marshal gets paid? Well, I compliment him on a new dish or a cocktail, give him plenty to eat, and let him steal moderately. He's satisfied. That's one secret of our organization. No money. No wages. It just happened gradually, of course . . . the way a country, or a court, grows up. There's Harmony. Harmony has capacity enough for a Prime Minister. She's a remarkable stenographer. She's a trained nurse. She has driven an aeroplane. She has been on the stage. She breaks broncos, and can shoot like a trooper, and here she is. The only thing she can't do is to think for me. But I hold her up like the others, so they can see around a little."

His rude guffaw penetrated me like a knife. Yet I could not help looking at this wonder-woman as he spoke.

Frail and slender, she certainly did not seem the paragon of physical strength he described her to be, but lovely she was. Her hands positively gripped the arms of her chair to prevent her from swaying too perceptibly under the dizzying pleasure of his praise; and her eyes poured a rich, warm flood of speaking gratitude over this ludicrous, bloated, incredibly sickening egotist. She vibrated like the string of a harp under his mawkish touch. But she did not say a word, fearing no doubt lest she should interrupt the stream of his own discourse. Yet it was dread of her open championship of the brute that made me hesitate to open my lips.

"What's it all about, Dale; what do you hope to get out of it?" I asked at last.

"Make 'em come to me," he exploded.

"Who?"

"Why, all of them. The fools that think they are running things, and the fools that are letting themselves be run. I'm between them. They meet in me. And they know it. Oh, they don't want to let on. But they will."

"You're just another reformer, then—a socialist, eh?"

"No, sir. I'm an *émigré*, an aristocrat. The crowd is more stupid than its masters."

"Want to get rich?"

"Money, pooh. Would I stay here if I wanted money? That isn't the thing. It's the secret acknowledgment of the best, and I've practically got that already, only it has to be organized. Every soul in the world wants the feeling of power. My philosophy gives it to them. In another six months I shall have my mailing bureau ready to operate, and then we'll see. Advertising is a great power perverted. If advertising will accomplish what it does in making people give up something to get something else, think of what it will do when I begin to give them the greatest thing in the world—the feeling of power—in return for nothing!"

I wondered just how far I could go

without betraying the fact that I was leading him on in his folly.

"See here, Dale," I ventured, "is your scheme military or political?"

"Military, of course. Politics are absurd."

I had lost all sense of reserve by this time.

"I know what you want," I said. "You aspire to be a dictator."

He sat back blandly, grinned at me, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, why not?"

"No objection at all," I said. "But where are your fighting followers?"

His little pained eyes snapped.

"They'll come," he said. "I told you the people were stupid. They are. But the people will fight . . . they will fight for an idea. And a man always embodies the idea." His voice was low and hoarse and he leaned toward me. "I already have the police. Every officer will do what I say, every one except the Chief . . . and watch him fall."

"You're talking plain treason."

"Truth is treason," he guffawed.

He raised his big bludgeon of a forearm oracularly, and I could hear the breathing of Harmony in the hush that fell over the great, dim room.

"Do you know my secret?" he asked, his voice grown more husky and his eyes bloodshot with the excitement. "*I sit still.* The man who sits still while the world is running away is the centre of the vortex, isn't he? Isn't the centre of a wheel the only point that doesn't move?"

"I see," I replied, resolving that my examination was ended.

"Damn it, man, I wonder if you do see?" he cried. "It's as plain to me as that firelight. I am the burning heart of the scheme. I couldn't get out of it if I wanted to. The others, the ones farthest from me, are those dead ashes."

Tremont had got up and was standing sidewise with his face glowing in light of the flame.

Suddenly a new idea struck him, and he turned to me, so excited he had suddenly become quiet.

"Walton, by George! . . . you're the man. You're anæmic. You're delicate. They'd never suspect you of anything at all. Do you see? I've got to have somebody to appear to be the leader. I won't do at first. I've got to have a blind, understand? You're just the type. I would stand all the gaff, be the real power. But I would hold you up. They'd think it was you."

I laughed unrestrainedly for the first time that evening.

"Thanks, old chap, it's good of you," I assured him. "But I have no political talents."

His voice rose to a roar, and I could see honestly he wanted me to say yes. He regarded me as a valuable tool; and I finally had to close the discussion by telling him I would think it over.

I left the house with an indescribable faintness. In this fantastic topsy-turvy land of Tremont's brain, my nerves had undergone a severe trial. Had it been only for the things he said, I should have departed as light-heartedly as I came. But I must confess that the combination of weird experiences I encountered that night hung over me for days like a strong opiate.

For one thing, he mingled an indescribable modesty with all this boasting. It was the fact that in his most delirious visions he positively *blushed* with the self-consciousness of a boy who has just shown a stranger his biceps. There was something simple and humble and trustful about his sense of greatness that made me see plainly how much he himself believed in it. And the quiet allegiance of his house, of the girl, of the three or four servants whom I encountered—their unquestioning consecration to his welfare—offered too clear proof that he had recourse to some uncanny power.

Had I merely been in a madhouse, I might have shaken off the damnable ague that took hold on me. But it was not a madhouse, it was a perfectly reasonable house, admirably and efficiently run, a house that defied all one's prophecies to the effect that it certainly must

topple in as soon as one had left it, and crush the monstrosity it contained.

Fear possessed me as I walked away, fear for poor Tremont and the emptiness of his vast self-illusionment, fear, pitiful fear for the poor girl who shared it with him, and worse than that, a definite inescapable fear lest this threatened power should ever come to be exercised in reality.

Tremont himself was more than convinced; he was dedicated. Here was a man who, if he was not the tyrant he thought himself, would become so at the cost of any sacrifice of others. And those who were around him were pouring the oil of adulation on the fire, luring him further and further into his desperate error.

I was hastening my steps toward the street car, literally thanking the stars for their company, when I heard a cheery feminine voice behind me.

"Won't you wait a moment, Mr. Walton? I have been trying to catch up with you."

It was the secretary, Harmony. She came up beside me with the easy self-assurance of an old friend. The thought struck me that I ought to reason with this young woman, I ought to save her if I could.

"See here," I broke in, roughly. "I'm ashamed of Tremont for filling you with all that stuff."

"What stuff?" she asked, turning her eyes full on mine, with an expression of child-like interest.

"Why, that nonsense!" I burst out. "You know as well as I do. Dictator, King . . . all that silly rot."

I stopped suddenly. I became conscious of the dead weight of her questioning, puzzled silence. Then I turned and faced her squarely.

"You . . . Why, you don't believe it, do you?"

"I believe *him*," she said.

"The things he imagines about himself?"

"Why, of course. He doesn't imagine them, you know. They have been decreed. He would like to be as other people are. But he must be what he is, mustn't he?"

Nothing could have been more final. I simply stared at her. In ordinary circumstances I should have put myself down as a rowdy.

"But . . ." I ejaculated. "But that he is great . . . that men need him . . . that we would be better off if we had kings . . . all that sort of thing?"

"Wouldn't we?" she asked, smiling at me with those eyes full of bright faith. "What are men? Men are, well, they're like dogs, or children, aren't they? Always doing wrong, making trouble . . . of course they don't mean to. But they must have a father, mustn't they? There must be some one who understands and leads. I knew it years ago. That men were crying for a master. And I have found him. To think that I am the one who has found him, and that I can help him, Mr. Walton!"

She was radiant. In that dark night, I positively swear a circle of light surrounded her head, and was reflected in her shining eyes. I defy anyone to have avoided half believing her.

"Good heavens," I thought. "It is terrible enough to think yourself a god, but when a really good woman keeps telling you so what hope is there left of sanity!"

I had another glimpse of Dale Tremont that trip. I was in a taxi in the crowded downtown streets on my way to my train. The driver stopped at a crossing, and I felt rather than saw the sudden concerted movement which takes place in a crowd when some strange object comes into sight. The traffic in the street ahead seemed to divide for a moment, then through the middle of it came two spanking bays, smartly pulling an old plush-upholstered, shiny brougham. In the rear seat lolled Dale Tremont bareheaded, attired in his flamboyant dressing-gown, with a plaid robe drawn up over his knees. He had an open volume in his lap; a half a dozen other books were scattered on the floor of the brougham. The old negro who had served us the evening before sat stiff as a rod on the

box. I did not catch Tremont's eye. I did not laugh with the rest of the crowd. I sat in serious and awful concern, watching Tremont, as he gazed severely ahead of him, enjoying this demonstration, I felt sure, as though it had been a triumph.

I cried to my driver to hurry, to take another route, to get me to the station as quickly as possible, and out of this city of hallucinations. . . .

VI

THAT summer in Maine I shall remember always. Not because I fell in love or had any adventures at all. Quite the contrary, it was a summer of hard and continuous work, during which I saw the soul of my first real book arise from the heaps of dry material I had spent a solid year collecting in Spain. I refer to my authoritative work on "Iberian Origins."

The reaction was even more exhilarating than the work itself had been. I went down to New York loaded for bear. I was going to play. The theatres, the Midnight Frolics, the shimmy and the jazz were my programme. And if ever a man wanted to be free of embarrassing entanglements I was he. So I could have writhed in bitter anguish when I found Dale Tremont practically waiting for me on my doorstep.

He had been in town two days. He had done nothing except look me up. He counted on me to show him round. He assured me with pompous playfulness that he had not been to New York in five years, and I could see only too plainly, by the silly attitudinizing habits into which he had fallen, that he expected the town to believe he was giving it a treat. In short, he promised to be a voluble and impossible ass anywhere he happened to be put. Even Greenwich Village wouldn't have taken him for a prophet.

I remember glancing at him sharply a second time to make quite sure he was not still wearing the silk dressing-gown. As it happened his dinner suit was the correct thing, but he was fairly bursting it open and he had the same ruddy, overfat air of indulgence, resembling behind his white shirt front nothing so much as a geranium blossom emerging from a bottle of milk.

How was I to get by with this overload? Where did he expect me to take him? How long would he stay? I clenched my teeth and decided to give the man every opportunity to hang himself. It was the easiest method. I knew if he made himself a bore the people I took him to see would soon force him to register extreme discomfort.

I am not going to describe what happened. Tremont went with me to three little affairs, where he met some extremely amusing, and a few quite important, people. Each experience was worse than the one before. I knew that my friends began to suspect me of a sudden and general looseness of judgment. Tremont bellowed and interrupted, he guffawed and contradicted, he strutted and grew mysterious, he posed and prophesied and exuded a strong whiff of the intellectual stables.

From the first two of these affairs he came home with me spluttering and indignant and sat consuming things in my apartment until morning. He was decidedly hurt by the mildly offended way people were treating him, but he remained impregnably convinced that a certain chosen two or three had embraced his message with fervent welcome. Even the bric-à-brac in the china shop will smirk and simper a trifle if offered a chance of immunity from the bull. I have no doubt Dale frightened at least half of the people he met into silence. The rest shrugged their shoulders and wondered.

The third excursion ended in a row. I was unaware of anything out of the ordinary until I heard an exchange of sharp words and saw Tremont standing in the door declaiming a rather offensive farewell, with a grand gesture and a grin on his face which clearly required all his composure to maintain. He had said something to a very clever woman, one of the cleverest and most discon-

certing women in the United States, I believe. He should never have tried it.

I found him in my rooms an hour later.

"What the dickens is the matter, Walton? Has New York gone soft? Here I have given my life, my whole life, to the truth. And these people don't see it. By God, I can't be wrong. They *must* be."

His face was purple. He had opened his collar and the upper button of his shirt. He was striding jerkily and a little unsteadily across the room.

I could have howled at him. His departure from Aylston's party, his whole conduct had placed me in a pretty glare of criticism. I had myself left the house amid a perfect battery of arch and suggestive glances. I wondered whether I had a decent acquaintance left. And this fool who had changed the complexion of the world back yonder from his Hickville window-pane, and suddenly discovered that the poor old world was oblivious of his existence, put me in a mordant humour.

"You ought to have hired a hall, Tremont," I said, icily. "The whole trouble with you is you are not thorough enough."

"D'you mean to say I could possibly be wrong? You didn't think so before. You didn't let on."

"Of course I thought so," I replied. "I said so, too. You're funny."

"But cities are no different the world over . . . people either. And back home? You don't *know* how they ate out of my hand."

"Oh, yes, you were a big frog," I answered indifferently, "but my dear fellow, what a small puddle it was?"

The expression seemed to crumple him like a wallop. At that moment I became aware that there was something most awfully tragic about this dishevelled, trembling, hopeless mass which loomed shouting above me.

"But, my God!" he cried. "Do you remember Mark Sumner's suicide? I drove him to it. I procured Chief Williams' ruin. He died afterward. He was having my house watched. Good Heavens! Walton, I've got to be right. I've done too much. I whipped the Hills out of town. There's more. There's lots more. There's Harmony . . . I've fought like a caged bear. I've used everything I had. I thought it was the thing to do . . . I swear, Walton . . . if, if I am not . . ."

As Tremont blurted out his confession I got up from my chair, altogether enraged at last. I tried to speak quietly. His own voice had risen to a hoarse scream.

"I know what you are going to say," I flung out. "You're going to say that if you are not an immortal god, you must be a peculiarly loathsome devil. I didn't know how much of one you were. Now, I begin to guess . . ."

"Walton, for goodness' sake . . ."

The huge mass seemed to melt into rivulets of sweat.

"Never mind," I broke in. "I want no more confessions. I want you to get out of here, instantly, as quick as you can. I hate your damned impudence for telling me these things. Tell them to the police! Now go."

VII

A FEW days later I was given a telephone message to call at Bellevue Hospital. A lady had asked me to come and see a friend of hers who wanted me. It was Harmony. She had been back home, worrying about him frightfully, and had felt a sudden intuition that something had gone wrong. She had come on immediately, found him missing at his hotel and searched the hospitals.

The first thing that Tremont asked of me was to serve as witness to their marriage. He had left her his property, but feared the possibility of a family row over it. The poor fellow was utterly changed. He was fearfully weak and sinking. The doctors gave me their professional version of his case, but I had my own idea. I knew that for years he had been scarcely more than an iron skeleton of will, with the flesh hung upon it. It was the breaking of

his will that killed him. But he summoned the strength to tell me the story of that last night after he had left my apartment.

It seems that he walked furiously and blindly about the city. His conscience began to torture him so that he had to stop from time to time actually doubled up with the pain. He presently found himself running into walls, stumbling over gutters and butting into doorways. He was far downtown.

He had been wandering for hours, when he aroused himself from a fit of unconsciousness, sitting in the vestibule of a great building. He put out his hand and the revolving door gave before it. An elevator, with the gate slid back and a light burning in it, stood at the bottom of the shaft. He entered and shot up as far as it would go. As he rose he became exhilarated. He was going away from the world. He wanted to get as high above the earth as he could, out of the clutches of men.

He left the car at the top floor and walked to a window at the end of the hall. He guessed he was about forty stories high. Suddenly he had a frantic desire to get out. He began to think about means by which he could reach the roof. In his search for a stairway that might lead to a hatch above, he stumbled over a long coil of stout rope. He made a loop in the end of this and began throwing it upward out of the window. He could not say how many times he threw it, but at last it caught firmly on some projection higher up on the outside of the building, for when he drew it back it became taut and resisted his strength.

He let himself out on the sill and began to climb hand over hand against the wall of the building. He never thought of his danger. All he knew was that he had to get to the very top somehow. He could see the lights of the island city over his shoulder. They seemed to be lashing him on the back, like ropes of fire, driving him up. He had to escape them. But when he reached the top there was no escape either. He tried to hide from the city. It stretched too far on all sides and leered at him over the low walls. Ten million people leered at him over the walls and cried, "We don't know you . . . we don't know you!"

No, it was not the people, it was the lights that were leering at him so fiendishly. The people, all those millions, whom he had thought so futile, so inferior, so ignorant, all those inconsequential souls simply turned over in their sleep and ignored him. It was horrible. He didn't remember any more. He grovelled a little on the roof, tried to bite the yielding asphalt that covered it, and fell unconscious. A watchman found him in the morning. . . .

VIII

I COULD not sentimentalize much over Tremont's death. If he was really guilty of the offences he admitted to me, his end was better than he deserved. But when I had comfortably settled Harmony in the Pullman, and sat for a few moments opposite her trim, proud little black-gowned figure, I found the courage to say:

"Harmony, you knew him better than anyone. What was there about him that others didn't know . . . that made you like him so much?"

"I loved him," she answered in a low voice.

"Yes, yes, of course . . . " I said.

She saw my embarrassment and came to my rescue.

"If you mean what made me go to him first, it was because he loved justice. He had a passion for justice . . . for the truth . . ." She paused, trying to find the words to express her meaning. "Perhaps you can't understand. You couldn't, I'm afraid . . . But . . . you remember Dale was hounded out of the Wilhampton Club for taking a woman there? Well . . . that woman was my mother."

The first tear I had seen Harmony shed glistened on her cheek.

"Poor mama," she went on. "It didn't help her any. It didn't result in

anything but harm to Dale. I suppose you can't see. I suppose it seems foolish, a quixotic, useless thing for him to have done. But the president of the Wilhampton then—you know him—was my father. He deserted my mother . . . never married her. And that's why *I* think what Dale did was wonderful . . . No one on earth but him would ever have thought of it . . ."

HE WOULD MARRY AGAIN

By Carl Glick

HIS first marriage was a failure and ended in a divorce. And he winced when his wife asked to take back her maiden name. But not daunted, he planned to try again. So to the matrimonial agency he wrote, telling them of the qualities he wished for in the proposed wife. . . .

"She must be a woman, soft of speech, gentle in disposition, meek and mild, considerate and forgiving. It is not necessary that she have money. Sympathy is more to be desired. Perhaps you know of a woman whose former husband mistreated her, and cold, brutal, and unfeeling killed the love in her heart. To me let it be given to awake the flame again. To me let such a woman come that I may see the birth of a starved soul."

And the agency replied, giving him the name and address of his former wife.

F SHARP MINOR

By Muna Lee

I SHALL be a little poet
And sing of little things—
I who love the gray dove's breast
More than the cardinal's wings.

I who love most the deepening mist
Before it falls in rain:
I who love the snow-filled cloud
More than the snow-heaped plain.

Who above the rose's arrogance
Sets the spiderwort's green spears—
Oh, I shall sing of little things
Nor care if no one hears.

THE NEW LOVE

By V. H. Friedlaender

I

THE attractive young man in white flannels murmured several times with conviction a word which, though brief, is not always printed in full. He then, with a reckless disregard for his whiteness sat—or, more accurately, crumpled—down against the red brick wall that had been the scene of his interview with Una Mansell.

Una Mansell was the attractive young woman in pale blue linen who, now retreating down a sun-dappled glade, was being absorbed gradually and harmoniously into the woodland vista! But even in retreat her back continued to express lofty and unshakable purpose.

The young man's face, on the other hand, was an arena of two warring emotions. In part he had the creased and almost tearful look of a disappointed baby; in part he exhibited a certain complacent, if humorous, appreciation. But it was the disappointment that after a moment prevailed. He murmured his relieving word once more.

"No use, was it?" observed a singularly soft and sympathetic voice from somewhere, as it seemed to him, in the circumambient ether. "But then, of course, you did it all wrong."

He looked up quickly, and there, seated on the wall immediately above his head, was a contrasting but at least equally attractive young woman.

He recoiled—as far as anyone sitting down can be said to do so. "No, really—you mustn't!" he warned her hastily.

She looked surprised. "Mustn't what?"

"Talk to me—get to know me. You'll regret it. I assure you it won't be good for you!" he urged.

Mastering her surprise, the young woman on the wall tilted her delightful head slightly, the better to consider him.

"But what I was hoping," she explained engagingly, after a pause, "was that it might be good for *you*."

"No—no," he continued repressively. "You don't understand; you don't know me. Excuse me, but I *must* speak plainly. I—I am not liable to love's young dream. And even if I were, it would be my duty to tell you that I am by no means off with the old love yet. In fact, as far as I can see, it is extremely doubtful whether I ever shall be. But if I were—oh, if I were!—the very last thing I should contemplate would be to be on with the new."

It must be recorded that the words did not speak nearly as badly as they print. For the young man had, to an unconscionable degree, the quality of charm. And so, although he spoke with vehemence and haste words very seldom addressed with impunity to attractive young women, there was a kind of undercurrent to them, as though he did not really so much repudiate the advances of the lady on the wall as throw himself on her mercy with regard to them, and invite her to share the humours of his situation.

So, at any rate, she must have taken it, for she leaned suddenly toward him, smiling.

"Are you asking me," she enquired with renewed astonishment, indeed, but without resentment—"not to fall in love with you?"

"Yes—yes," he agreed gratefully, but

now (since the matter was made clear) a little absently. "Just that. Just to get down off that wall and go home, if you will. There's a good girl." He settled himself firmly once more against the wall, and entered upon a period of meditation.

The good girl considered this proposal on its merits.

"I can't do that," she decided, however.

He sighed, though without abandoning his preoccupation; it was as if what she said were so familiar that he heard it subconsciously.

"No, I was afraid you wouldn't," he observed. "They never will."

"Because I am at home," she added.

"Because you are at home?" This, evidently presenting a variation from the familiar, secured his fuller attention. He brought his eyes back to her. "I see. This wall—is a garden wall, then?"

"Yes. And I am staying in the house that goes with the garden. And as I was cutting lavender a little while ago I heard voices. And I—" she hesitated.

"Couldn't—help—overhearing—what we—said," concluded the young man as though it were one word, and a poor one at that. "Of course. Exactly."

She considered this, too, with deliberation, but rejected it.

"Well, no," she amended. "I came up closer to listen."

"You did?" With incredible swiftness he scrambled to his feet. "I congratulate you!"

"You con—?"

"Of course!—on being done with lies and hypocrisies and conventions," he explained with joyous rapidity. "You must have noticed the same thing in me. Instead of pretending, for instance, that it is young women who attract me, I tell the simple truth, tested by experience, which is that I am dangerously attractive to young women. Instead of telling Una that I find I am not worthy of her, I ask her frankly to be released from my engagement because I don't want to marry her. And instead of giving *you* to understand that you are at liberty to catch me if you can, I tell you honestly at once that you haven't a chance. And so on."

He paused for breath. The young woman on the wall was looking down at him with what was undoubtedly fascination.

"I see," she murmured, a little blankly; almost, he feared, a little regretfully.

"Of course," he added, seeking to brace her with his impersonality, "the idea is still new to you; but the root of the matter must be in you, or you wouldn't have confessed to coming up closer to listen. Frankness!—that's the thing, you know; good or bad, frankness about it. In literature, in art, in life. Think of the time it saves, just at the expense of a little courage. And then the misunderstandings that it clears out of the way of love and friendship!"

He glowed up at her, but her regard was now pensive, perhaps dubious—not, at any rate, wholly apostolic. "Well," he prompted confidently, "what's your difficulty?"

"I was only thinking," she confessed, "that, if that is so, what about the lady—the lady who, just now—"

"Oh, Una?" His eyes clouded. "Yes, Una appears to be an exception with a vengeance, I admit." He relapsed into harassed thought. "You heard what I said to her?" he demanded presently.

"Every word," she conceded, with the candour that he had admired.

"And I didn't mince them?"

"No—oh, no!"

"Very well, then. Can *you* explain it?"

"Yes," she said. "It's what I've been trying to do ever since we—met."

"You have?" His lips fell apart, and from her perch above him she suddenly spilt a cascade of laughter.

"You look," she elucidated, "like a baby bird waiting for me to drop the worm of wisdom into your mouth."

But he was not to be thus easily disconcerted.

"That's it!" he encouraged heartily. "You're getting the hang of it splendidly. Well then, *explain*, will you?"

"Why, you went the wrong way to work, as I began by telling you. I hap-

pen to have been thinking of the subject lately; it comes into a play written by a friend of mine, and he has treated the situation as you treated it just now. I knew he was wrong; but now I shall be able to prove it to him—from real life. That's why I came up to listen; I could hear you making the same mistake."

"What mistake?"

"Talk," she said briefly.

"But how," he protested, "can a man break off his engagement *without* talk? And for that matter, as you've heard for yourself, I haven't been able to do it, even with all the exceptional amount of talk at my command."

She nodded. "That's because you've done nothing *but* talk, I should think. Have you?"

"No; but—" The light of her meaning suddenly dazzled him.

"Are you telling me," he demanded, "that, for all my plain speaking, Una doesn't really believe I want to be rid of her?"

"She doesn't believe it. I don't know, of course, what grounds she may have for not believing it, but she doesn't."

"Oh, as for *grounds!*" Clearly, by the light of this new suggestion, he reviewed a host of them. "By Jove, I believe you're right!" He spoke with the liveliest interest. "And I say—as you know all about it, anyhow, there'd be no harm in my telling you, would there?—and just asking your advice?"

"If you don't," she assured him, "I'll thrust it upon you."

"But, I say—!" He was checked by obvious misgiving.

"Well?"

"Well—I mean—" he abandoned himself resolutely to the exigencies of his creed—"you won't go and get fond of me yourself, now will you?" he appealed.

She reflected. "How can I tell?" she argued at last reasonably. "I might."

"Oh, well—*fond!*" he revised, and it was evident that he was anxious not to be deprived by a mere quibble of her counsels. "I only mean you won't go and want to *marry* me, will you?"

II

THE young woman on the wall regarded him with a certain reserve.

"You don't allow, then," she suggested in a spirit of detached enquiry, "for there ever being anyone else?"

"But of course I do," he rejoined simply. "I allow for everything. Didn't I tell you I'm an author? My name's Richard Vane. You don't know it, I see. No. But you will."

She avoided with some dexterity the thin ice of comment.

"Mine's Vivien Otwey, and *nobody* knows it," she confided ruefully. "What sort of an author are you?"

"All sorts—novelist, dramatist, essayist, and (the whole being greater than its parts) poet. But, as I was saying, although I always allow for there being someone else, the plain fact is that, as soon as I come along—" his gesture, half dismayed, half amused, indicated a rule altogether without exception. "However—" with a smile he committed himself yet once more to a reckless optimism, and at the same time allowed her to see that he had guessed her little secret—"you *will* try to make him last, won't you?"

She hesitated. Her eyes glanced laughter and charming invitation at him.

"But I do like you," she objected, with a touch of shy wistfulness.

"Yes, I know. But you mustn't. I'm—I'm taboo."

"Yes. Of course." She ceased suddenly to dally on the borders of forbidden primrose paths. "And so am I, you know. Miss Otwey regrets that a previous engagement—" she gave a little sigh of acquiescence.

"Oh, *rather*," he assured her with relief. "So may I tell you about my engagement now?"

"All right."

"Well, then, you see. I like girls; *of course* I like girls—within reason. Only reason, for me, stops short of marrying them. I've a lot of work to get through in the next ten or fifteen

years, and—well, the plain fact is I don't want to marry for as far ahead as I can see. At the same time, of course, I enjoy being in love! I find it perfectly easy, and most agreeable and stimulating to the poetic and creative faculties to fall in love. I began by doing it with girls—just ordinary, unattached girls, you understand—and it was nearly fatal to me. They expected me to marry them, and so did their relatives. None of them understood that what I needed was simply an ideal—a *really* impossible she, inaccessible as the stars; somebody who would receive my roses and rapture without at once construing them into an offer to share my garden and my fountain-pen. For the trouble with women, I have found, is that they are *not* uncertain, coy, and hard to please; on the contrary, I please them without an effort, I make certain of them without wanting to. So, next, I thought things would go better if I picked out girls who were already engaged to be married—girls irrevocably bespoke. But they didn't; they went worse. I got into trouble with their—their bespeakers for putting my finger into other people's pies, and with the girls themselves for not putting it in far enough and hooking out the plum. From this it was obvious that the case of the married would be the case of the engaged over again, only intensified; and not being a villain, as you can see, I stopped short at the engaged. In fact, I had really given up hope; nothing seemed even moderately safe. But then—there was Una! Can I be blamed," he demanded, hovering as usual between laughter and vexation, "for supposing that I was safe with *Una?*"

"I don't know," she reminded him. "You were going to tell me."

"Oh, of course; you don't know who Una *is*," he remembered. "Well, she's the only child of James Mansell—of the Mansell millions, you know. A few months ago journalism took me to her father's house, and her father took me into his dining-room for lunch, and at lunch I was lost. Una was there." He relapsed into reverie.

"And you fell in love?" she prompted, laughing a little incredulously.

He started. "No, no!—not any more than usual, that's to say, I'm in love with *you*, for that matter. You're like a dryad perched up there with your tangled hair and your bubbling brook of a laugh. Only of course I daren't say so. But with Una—well, I let myself *go*, you see."

"Oh, but why?" she inquired, with the quickness of jealousy.

"Why? Because, of course, I felt absolutely confident of safety for once—protected, as I thought, by my disgraceful financial inadequacy. Imagine it! How could I be in danger there, of all places? Wasn't I obviously a fortune-hunter if I aspired to Una? And if Una stooped to me, couldn't I depend on her parent jolly well seeing that she didn't get me?—Yet I wasn't safe."

He sighed reminiscently.

"If Una," he pursued, "were ever so cruel as to say to her father, 'I want the moon,' Mr. Mansell would never get over the deadly blow to his financial pride when he found that wasn't on the market. But she didn't. She said instead, 'I want a poet;' and, if you will believe me, it has been her father's pleasure to buy me for her—to indulge her in a whim that for sheer extravagant uselessness, he reckons delightedly, she has never equalled. How could I foresee such an appalling possibility? The very measure of my moneylessness is the measure of my fascination for Mr. Mansell, you see. Anybody, he argues, observing that he has been able to afford *me* for Una, will be convinced that there is simply nothing he cannot afford. So I am a millionaire's darling—the last sign and seal of his millionairishness—his unmistakable intimation to the world that he has millions to burn. It has been hellish, I can tell you—ever since I realized it."

He canvassed her face for sympathy, but she withheld it.

"Miss Mansell," she said distantly, "didn't seem to me at all the sort of girl to do her own proposing."

"Her own proposing? Of course she didn't—or I could have refused her. Nobody did any proposing; that's the point. It—it wasn't considered necessary; it was just taken for granted. Haven't I been telling you that I let myself go? And so I could do nothing. For, of course, I did tell Una that I adored her; I told her quite often; it was so glorious to be able at last to tell a lovely girl one adored her without running the slightest risk of having to marry her. You can see that, can't you?" he implored.

But she would not say that she could see it.

"You seem to have made her believe very thoroughly," she remarked with significance, "that you adored her."

"Oh, because she won't disbelieve it even now, you mean? Yes, but you've helped me to understand why that is. Of course she won't disbelieve it—now you mention it! Is it likely?—since she happens to be young and pretty and a dear, as well as rich, and her rejected suitors strew the ancestral halls of a dozen counties. Only none of them have happened to be poets, so she doesn't understand me. But she has heard that poets are peculiar about money, and she thinks—by Jove, yes, that's it!—that all I have said only means I am peculiar about *her* money to the point of having a prejudice against sharing it. And, while determined not to yield to my poetic scruples and delicacies, she is thoroughly enjoying them. They are part of what she wanted—of the object, ornamental though useless, that has been bought for her. She doesn't love me any more than I love her, but I'm still a novelty to her. She never had a poet before, and she wants to watch the works go round. I've tried to escape her and I've failed; you heard how utterly I failed. She hasn't an idea that what I've said three thousand times is true. So she has gone away—not, as I hoped, with indignation and outraged pride and the reverberations of everlasting farewells, but with the deadly feminine passion of protection, the determination to save me from my unpractical self, to do what *she* knows is best for me by marrying me and taking care of me for ever afterward. Do you mean to tell me you have any way of combating *that?*"

He paused, challenging her with tragic eyes that yet danced to the hazards of his temperament and situation.

"Yes." She accepted the challenge easily. "When we met," she reminded him, "you referred to a proverb; quite a good proverb, as far it goes. It *is* best to be off with the old love before you are on with the new—if possible. Only sometimes it isn't possible; sometimes there's no means of being off with the old love except being on with the new."

She waited, to let that take effect.

"So, if you like," she added presently, "I'll be the new."

He made a quick defensive movement, and shook his head at her.

"I say, you know—!" he admonished persuasively. "Now didn't you promise me—?"

"Of course, I only mean I'd help you by *pretending* to be the new," she assured him demurely. "Don't you believe me? Oh, well, if you'd rather not—there was a rustle, ominous of departure, in the leaves above his head.

"No—no!" He hung in harassment between the undeniable Scylla of Una and the almost equally inevitable Charybdis of his companion.

"If only you'll stick to it," he begged, searching her face for signs of a resolution that it was evident he did not find there. "But you won't; I know you won't. You'll go and get fond of me in spite of yourself, and then you'll be angry or hurt or something because *I've* not changed. We'd better drop it, you know."

He looked forlornly down the path that had (but so temporarily) swallowed up Una.

"What is it exactly," he capitulated weakly, "that you propose, then?"

"Only that I should open the garden gate," she soothed and heartened him, "and that you should walk in and be compromised. It won't take long. I'm

all alone here just at present, except for my old nurse and the servants. And the scandal of us will be a perfect and immediate godsend to the village. It will spread like influenza and reach Miss Mansell in no time. In a week, I prophesy, you'll be free. Coming? We'll have lunch under the cedar and leave the gate open, so as to be in full sight of anyone coming along the path. I generally do, anyhow, because this view's so jolly, isn't it? Like a switchback in heaven."

He looked again, but without enthusiasm, at the beautiful, undulating line of the trees, that was followed by the ribbon of the path. Then he roused.

"Lunch," he echoed longingly. "I say—I am hungry!"

III

"So they've gone." Richard Vane concluded his recital buoyantly. "And no hearts broken. Vivien, you're a witch! Your estimate of a week erred ridiculously on the side of caution, and they've gone after four days." His relief found expression in a sort of chant. "Shunted me, bag and dilapidated baggage, and gone. Shaken the dust of me off their golden slippers, and gone. Consigned me to penniless perdition and gone, gone, gone! How can I ever thank you? I owe it all to you."

She made no reply, and he glanced up at her with sudden apprehension. They were seated, according to their custom (although now all necessity for it had lapsed) under the cedar, and the gate into the woods was open. He, on the ground at her feet, had his back to it; she was gazing over his head at the switchback of the path. Presently she gave a sigh, and leaned back in her chair. Far away, on the last crest of the switchback, a tiny figure had come into view. It walked toward them, and was gradually lost to sight in the succeeding valley.

"What are you thinking?" Richard asked uneasily.

Her expression was enigmatical.

"That even gratitude was not in the bond," she replied; and added after a moment, with the faintest inflection of irony, "So now you ride away?"

He stirred uncomfortably; his worst fears were realized.

"There you go—making me feel a cad," he complained. He looked up at her despondently. "Didn't I tell you how it would be?"

"No—no," she promised tremulously. "I'm not asking *that* of you, Richard, truly. I know you can't m-marry me."

Out of the valley and on to the next crest of the path came the approaching figure; it was now distinguishable as a man.

"Only"—her fingers fastened nervously on his nearest shoulder—"oh, Richard, I can't bear it!"

"Ah, come now!" he urged. "It isn't as bad as all that yet, you know. Why—hang it—it *can't* be, after *only four* days! You're making me feel a beast, Vivien. I oughtn't to have let you help me out about Una; I knew all the time I oughtn't. I wish you'd never seen me."

"No—no!" she repeated convulsively. "Because it *is* better to have loved and lost than—"

"Vivien!" He groaned in genuine distress.

She glanced at him timidly.

"Then you do mind—just a little?" she ventured.

"Mind? That last infirmity of sentimental balderdash? That Victorian trickle of saccharinity? *Mind!*"

"I—I meant about me."

"Oh, you!" He patted her hand on his shoulder encouragingly. Of course I mind about you. But, my dear child, you will be sensible, won't you? You know I'm most awfully fond of you. I wouldn't go away if it weren't for your sake. But it wouldn't be fair to stay, would it? Only, if I could marry *anybody*, Vivien dear, it would be you—"

"I wonder how many girls you've said that to?" she interjected, with sudden spirit.

His ingenuous flush betrayed him as a self-plagiarist.

"It isn't fair of you to go on like this," he said hurriedly. "You knew I didn't want to marry anybody; I told you so. Didn't I?"

"Yes," she agreed dully.

"Well, then!" he cajoled. "Let's be jolly again as we've been for the last four days."

"We can't," she said stonily. "Not to-day. That's what I've been trying to tell you."

"We can't?" he asked in surprise. "Why?"

She withdrew her eyes from the park. The approaching figure was considerably nearer now, and it was possible to see that he was unusually tall and broad.

"Because I've made him last," she said.

Then, seeing by his expression that he did not recognize the phrase as his own, she explained with a touch of panic haste.

"Oh, Richard, don't you remember my telling you there was someone else?—and you asking me to make him last? Well, I have."

"Really?" He was enormously relieved. "But that's ripping of you! Tell me all about him."

"There isn't time."

"My dear, I'm not riding away *to-day!*"

"No. But he's coming."

"Coming? Coming where?"

"Here. To-day."

"The deuce he is," he murmured interestedly, and straightened himself. "Who is he, then?"

"The dramatist I told you about—whose play I was reading. Oh, don't ask so many questions! I tell you, there isn't *time*. He'll be here in a minute or two now; he—he's just over that second dip in the path."

The young man followed her eyes and beheld emptiness. He looked incredulous.

She twisted her fingers nervously. "He is, I tell you! And you must help me, Richard—you must. Because I can't be engaged to him now; I won't marry him. You must tell him."

"I?"

The young man at last got a grasp of the impending situation, and disliked the look of it.

"Now, my dear, be reasonable," he urged anxiously. "What on earth would be the good of your being off with this old love when there isn't the remotest chance of—of a new? Don't do anything rash, Vivien, that you'll regret later on. Wait a week or two, at least. Then, when I've gone away and you've thought it over, if you still feel your engagement is a mistake, why, break it off. But not now."

"Yes, now." She tightened her fingers on his shoulder. "Because I can't do it myself, Richard—I daren't! You don't know him. And I helped *you*. Surely, surely you'll help me in return?"

"But what can I do?" he objected.

"You can tell him I can't marry him. Oh, can't you tell him I'm engaged to *you?* That would make him believe it."

"No doubt." His eyes wavered once more between dismay and amusement. "Only—forgive my labouring the point—I'm not engaged to you."

"Of course not. I won't hold you to it. The minute he has gone I'll release you."

She sighed.

"If you can *make* him go," she added, unhopefully.

"Oh, as for that!" he assured her.

"Then you will? Please, Richard!"

His smile was uneasy.

"It sounds all right, of course, put that way," he admitted with reluctance. "Only"—he nerved himself to frankness—"well, look here, Vivien! Suppose you're tempted to stick to me afterwards? I should be in a jolly awkward position, shouldn't I? Who's going to believe that our engagement was only a sham?"

"I will," she promised earnestly. "Truly I won't stick to you, Richard." Her voice trembled. "Oh, don't you see how it is? You're a poet, surely you understand? I don't expect you to love or marry me. Only—only once we have found the best, we can never put up with the second-best again, can we? And so

I can't be engaged to *him;* I won't be engaged to anyone—or marry anyone."

He stood up—moved, although not surprised.

"My dear," he said compassionately, "it *would* have been better if you'd never known me. But—yes, I understand. All right; I'll do it."

He turned. The newcomer had just reached the end of the switchback, and was on the level stretch of path that ran up to the garden gate.

Richard Vane was suddenly agitated in his turn.

"But I say, Vivien—he's rather like—surely he's not—you don't mean to say it's—Mackery?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Well, but you called him"—he checked at the inadequacy of the label—"you called him a dramatist!"

"And isn't he?"

"Yes, of course, but—*Mackery!*"

He flushed; it was evident that his youth was still joined to a few idols, and that high among them stood the man who was nearly at the gate.

"Vivien!"—he was shaken out of his mood of compassion for her by the unexpected greatness of his victory—"you don't mean you really want to throw *him* over?"

"Oh, Richard!" Her lips quivered. "You're not trying to get out of it, are you? I tell you I *won't* marry him."

"Hullo!" Mackery, swinging the gate shut behind him, announced himself easily, and she jumped up.

"Remember!" she murmured. "You've promised."

IV

Richard Vane saw her folded in a large embrace, and then guided (with every hypocritical appearance of snuggling happily against Mackery's waistcoat) towards the cedar again. But as she reached it he could not avoid the urgent demand in her eyes. She was beseeching him to keep his promise, although she had not the courage to give him any help.

Moreover, it was clearly now or never. Already Mackery was looking at him over her head—quite amiably, yet as if his presence were singularly incomprehensible.

He approached the two of them.

"This lady, sir," he said, with an odd weakness in his voice, "has entrusted me with her wishes on a matter of importance. I—I had rather have delivered them to any man than you, but, as there is no help for it, I must tell you that Miss Otwey desires to be released from her engagement to you."

"Heh?" said Mackery, a little absently.

The head upon his waistcoat suddenly burrowed further into it, and a choking sound proceeded from the neighbourhood of his right-hand pocket. He looked down at it.

"Say that again, young man, will you?" he ordered thoughtfully.

But of this dignified feat the young man felt himself incapable.

"Miss Otwey has changed her mind, sir," he paraphrased briefly. "She no longer wishes to marry you."

"Oh, she doesn't, doesn't she?" said Mackery slowly.

"And what," he added reasonably, "have you to do with the matter?"

"Noth—that is, I—the lady does me the honour to return my affection."

"You mean *you* wish to marry her?"

"Yes, sir," agreed Richard unhappily.

Mackery studied his face for a minute. Then, as though it were a book of reference and had given him the key to some other work, he detached the head that clung to his waistcoat and tilted it backwards.

"What have you been up to, Squirrel?" he inquired placidly.

"Squirrel!" In the midst of his sudden uneasiness Richard Vane was yet capable of feeling a pang of delight in the name. Why had *he* never thought of calling her Squirrel?

Vivien Otwey, now held at arm's length, bubbled into her delicious laughter.

"Only making him fit to be a husband to somebody some day," she protested.

The next instant Richard saw her

involved in a physical struggle with Mackery, and he stumbled—rather ineffectually, because he was preoccupied with her remark—to her protection.

He was too late. For it seemed that the article under dispute between them had been her left hand, and now Mackery had secured it and was flattening it against his own palm.

"Where is it?" he demanded.

With her free hand she searched a pocket and produced—after several objects which were taken from her and dropped on to the grass—a ring. Mackery gravely invested her third finger with it, smacked the hand to which the finger belonged, and tossed it from him. Then he looked at Richard.

"That's how the land lies, you see," he explained, half apologetically, half confidentially, wholly as man to man.

"But I'm afraid she must have been—" he hesitated, seeking some unwounding phrase.

"Camouflaging the scenery," suggested Vivien, with her face laid again sideways against Mackery's person, and one mischievous eye on Richard, "for his good."

But Richard was incapable for yet another moment of seeing with certainty how the now uncamouflaged land lay.

"Do you mean—she's *yours*, sir?" he asked incredulously.

"Oh, no," Mackery corrected. "She's her own. Like the rest of us. But we're married—yes. She's Evelyn Clare, you know."

She was Evelyn Clare!—planet of the comedy stage, whom he had always been going to see—when he had time; and he was John Mackery, leader and hope of the new drama. Richard Vane had a forlorn and insignificant sensation of being about ten years old. But he combated it vigorously. After all, there must be a hitch somewhere. Everybody knew that neither Evelyn Clare nor John Mackery was married.

"Indeed, sir?" he said cautiously. "Please believe, at any rate, that I—that this remote neighbourhood knows the lady only as Miss Otwey."

"Of course—of course," Mackery agreed, accommodating him courteously. "The fact is, you see, we were married only six weeks ago, and very quietly, to avoid fuss. Directly afterwards I was called unexpectedly to America on business. Meanwhile, my wife came here; but she wanted privacy, and if she'd come in my name she wouldn't have got it, and if she'd come in *her* name—her stage name—she wouldn't have got it. So she just came in her own name—the one she was born with, you know."

Yes; Richard knew now. His eyes blazed in a white face. He was silent only because he dared not yet trust his voice with the words that were leaping and straining to scorch Vivien Otwey who was Evelyn Clare who was Mackery's wife.

Mackery was studying him again thoughtfully.

"He seems a nice boy," he remarked inquiringly to his wife, as though they were alone.

"He is a very nice boy," she replied in the same manner. "So nice that his charm was in a fair way to be the ruin of him. Nobody had ever said him nay, or—or spanked him and put him in the corner. It wasn't good for him."

Mackery nodded, his eyes were still on Richard. "Yes, but all the same—you've really *hurt* him, Squirrel," he said with disapproval.

"I've not!" She swung round, her back against the wall of Mackery. "Richard—have I? You say you're a poet; you say you want the truth. Now we shall see! You don't love me, and I know it; well, I don't love you, and I've fooled you, and now *you* know it. Are you going to pretend, because of it, that you've a grievance—that I've really hurt you, and so go away with your head in the air? Or are you capable of seeing that what I've hurt is only your conceit—which needed to be hurt, and which (if you're worth anything) you ought to be *glad* to have hurt? Think! Didn't you ask me not to fall in love with you? And I haven't. Didn't you ask me to make John Mackery last? And I have. Didn't you say you wanted a really impossible she, inac-

cessible as the stars? Well, here I am! So now—which do you *really* love best, the truth or yourself?"

She flung her arms wide, and then dropped them, challenging him, demanding an answer.

And it did not come. He stood motionless, and although he stared at her, it was blankly, blindly.

But John Mackery, because he knew what that gaze meant, exhorted her, with a pressure of his hands on her shoulders, to be patient. She understood, and nodded very slightly in response. For Richard Vane was learning; under the lash of her challenge he was applying himself painfully to a new branch of youth's lesson of self-knowledge. If he shirked it, if he ended by evading the task because it was hard, and wrapped himself in some comfortable mental sleeping-bag of dignity or pique—he was dross. But if he could face the truth, even when it was a truth so discomfortable to himself, if he could bear to learn—which "always feels at first as if you had lost something"—then, indeed, he might prove to be of that precious enduring metal out of which artists are laboriously hammered by life.

He emerged from abstraction at last, and his colour fluctuated like a girl's. But he did not hesitate. Coming close up to them, he suddenly—with a gesture that his youth, his charm, and his sincerity robbed of unnaturalness—dropped on one knee and kissed her hand.

"Yes," he said simply, "I deserved it. Good-bye. And I beg your pardon."

He was on his feet again in an instant, and had turned to go. But another hand held him back in a friendly, approving grip.

"A nice boy," observed Mackery, as though he were not there.

"A very nice boy," corroborated Mackery's wife, in the same manner.

"Come and see us as soon as we get back to town," decided Mackery abruptly, offering him the delectable freedom of their house.

"Yes, Richard, do," Mackery's wife approved—and included him, by her smile, in the yet more delectable freemasonry of art.

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ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Mary Pitcairn

As a rule the sartorial secrets of the autumn season are most carefully guarded and seldom escape until September, but fortunately I have been graciously accorded the confidence of one of the leading Paris houses—a house, by the way, which has just opened new premises in London where it will be possible not only to gain confirmation of my ensuing remarks, but also to see some of the models described, forerunners of the three hundred picked designs that will be on view by the time this article appears in print. Commencing with that ever fruitful subject the evening gown, this unassailable authority proceeded to demonstrate the charms of the model that relies on something other than the insinuating train to gain its grace of line and perfection of poise. Black charmeuse—the material which absolutely refuses to lose its hold on popular favour whatever the time or occasion—went to the fashioning of this gown, which was short both back and front, while the sides extended in pointed cascades to within an inch or two of the floor. Exquisite panels of mingled jet and silver beads adorned the front and back, breaking the hem-line by their semi-circular finish; whilst a trail of shaded nasturtiums denoted the low waist-line.

Something of the same side effect was achieved by a wonderful design in moonlight-blue paillettes, but this time the sparkling substance was raised to reveal the soft satin underskirt, which coincided with the swathed corsage. One of those all too fascinating little capes formed the back of the bodice, the spangled material again being called into requisition; and a daring but highly successful additional colour note was given by grouped cherries in vivid rose-pink lightly scattering the front of the model. Yet another design that required no assistance from the train to emphasize its grace had borrowed something from those classical lines which are also deservedly in favour with the woman who possesses a naturally good figure. Blue-and-silver shot tissue was here allied to gold-patterned crêpe of Alma Tadema deep blue, the tissue being partly lined up to match, and a huge transparently pink rose, poised on one hip, appearing as the central point for the wonderful lines of the whole.

Many of the newest ideas in the dress world have their first exploitation—or "trial run," as it were—on the stage, and those who have fallen victims not only to Edna Best's vivacious charms, but also to the delightful one-piece model she wears in the second act of "Brown Sugar," will be glad to know that this is carried out in accordance with the very latest ideas on such a subject. In Miss Best's case an underskirt of dark blue gabardine is topped by a long-waisted bodice, and four floating panels are closely gathered just below the hips. These are lined up with white, the constant movement of this young actress giving full value to the excellent effect thus achieved, while the whole model has its every hem adorned by large round white medallions, a narrow white waistcoat completing the scheme. I found a design on much the same lines destined to take a leading position in the autumn repertoire of a well-known costumier, but here the underdress was expressed in printed crêpe, plaid-patterned in most joyous colourings, while navy gab again served for the detached panels, and a revered bodice buttoned low at either side.

The question of the autumn coat and skirt has also to be considered, and once more opinions are very much at variance. Very few of the leading houses, however, take much notice of the talk anent really longer skirts, and there is plenty of evidence, too, against the long line that distinguished the costume coats of the spring. Instead, everything appears to be in favour of the short sac coat which can be the most attractive of types and, given a good carriage, suits almost equally well the slim and the plump. In the latter case the continued liking shown for braiding can still further assist the general "becomingness" of such coats, the latest idea being to have the braid the same colour as the material. Thus we have black on black, navy on navy,

EXPLAINING "FEMININE CHARM"

By MILLICENT BROWN

ILLUSTRATED BY PENRHYN STANLAWS

I NOTICED a curious thing recently in a railway train. A nicely dressed woman entered and took a seat beside me. I saw that everyone was looking at her — staring, in fact. But not offensively, you understand. I caught myself doing the same thing. It was impossible to help it. Certainly it was not her beauty of feature that held the eyes of all, nor was it her costume. But there was something about her face and expression—I risked it, and spoke. "Would you mind telling me," I said, "*how* you keep your complexion so dazzlingly pure? You won't think me impertinent, but you seem to be over thirty, aren't you? And yet you haven't a line in your face, and your cheeks are quite peach-like. Do tell me how you do it." She laughed, quite good-naturedly. "Oh, that's very easy," she said; "I remove my skin." "You *what?*" I exclaimed, horrified. Again she laughed, and replied: "Sounds shocking, doesn't it? But I will explain. Instead of using face creams, I use only pure mercolized wax, procurable at any chemist's. The wax has a gentle absorbent action which takes up and *removes* the soiled and weather-beaten outer film-skin, without pain, irritation, or discomfort, thus revealing the real complexion fresh and clear underneath. Every woman has a beautiful complexion *underneath*, you know. Then, to keep my face firm and free from wrinkles, I merely indulge in a sparkling face bath two or three times a week, which I prepare by dissolving a little stymol, obtained at the chemist's, in a bowl of warm water. This also keeps away those unpleasant little blackheads and prevents shine."

nigger—still extraordinarily popular—on nigger, and so on, instead of the all too usual black on any tint. There is a rumour that scarlet is to be among the most favoured colours for autumn wear, but up to now I have not seen any costumes in this hue, though yellow friezes and materials that bring a new, more reddish tint into the over-popular rust colour are noticeable in several of the wholesale houses.

SKIN DEEP

We know that beauty is a power in the land and we hear that it is only skin deep, therefore it behoves every woman to protect her complexion, as a fortress, from the onslaught of the dust enemy that is the very atmosphere of town and country in these motoring days. One of the best ways to do this hygienically, pleasurably, and successfully is to use the Ganesh preparations discovered and dispensed by Mrs. Adair, of 92, New Bond Street; Paris and New York. She was the first to introduce a system of strengthening exercises together with a sound method of treatment that, while beautifying the eyes, improves the sight to such an extent that the need for glasses, except for the correction of special defects, is deferred for many years. Mrs. Adair has such a clever, pleasant way of taking the tiredness and consequent dulness out of the eyes, and that drawn, haggard look, the penalty of the age we live in, from the face, that the nerves are greatly soothed, and when this excellent treatment is finished the face looks altogether younger and fresher.

This eye treatment is but one, albeit a very important speciality of Mrs. Adair, and too much cannot be said for her Ganesh Eastern Oil and her great success in the fight against double chins, hairs on the face and other unsightly and uncomfortable happenings. In fact, her ability to take away what one should not have and replace what one should have is nothing short of marvellous. If one cannot go to Mrs. Adair for treatment the next best thing is to have and use her special home outfit, and now is the time to order it, in view of the country house visits and the extra care necessary for the complexion at this season of the year.

SPORTING GOSSIP

Mr. Roger Whiteman, the popular Turf Accountant of Oxford Street, has sent his Newmarket purchases—Pleiades (3 yrs.), by King's Proctor out of Royal Applause, and Aventine (3 yrs.), by Prince Palatine out of Francisca—to Hammond, the Lewes trainer, to be prepared for their engagements. The owner named is on the lookout for other likely ones to carry his blue and white check jacket and violet cap, which should be followed.

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To lunch at Billy's is now *the* thing, and many of the best residents go further and can be seen every night about 10 p.m. taking their Welsh rarebit at this popular restaurant.

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